

# BAPU

**A  
UNIQUE  
ASSOCIATION**

**VOLUME 2**

**GHANSHYAM DAS BIRLA**

I have always had the feeling while reading Gandhi's correspondence that I was taking a dip in the sacred Ganges and sipping its waters. ...

In this correspondence, a valuable history of the present times is to be found here. ...In this book the picture that presents itself to our mind of Ghanshyamdasji in a special way is that of a skilled statesman. ...

This is an ocean which has a great historical value. When the future generations want to understand our times, then this source book would become very useful and interesting. ... To me, a Gandhi fan, this book has given transcendental joy.

**Kaka Kalelkar**







**BAPU**  
**A Unique Association**



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## A UNIQUE ASSOCIATION

Volume II



GHANSHYAM DAS BIRLA



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY


**1977**

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**Rupees Ten**

Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay and Printed at  
Roopak Printers, Delhi-110032





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## हमर्षण

वायु की यह प्रकाशी वायु की हमर्षण

वायु ने समय २५८ गुणों को पतलित  
मैंने जो उल्लेखित (वा) उन सब का यह संग्रह  
है। महारथ माई इत्यादि ने भी जो गुण लिखे  
या मैंने उल्लेखित, उन सब का भी समावेश इसमें  
रहलिये है कि वे सब पत्र-व्यवहार वायु की उद्देश्य,  
प्रमाण या हानि करी हुआ है। मैंने भी जो  
उन लोगों को लिखा वह सब वायु के लिये ही था।  
उन सब की वायु के ही पत्र व्यवहार मानकर  
इस प्रकार में रहलिये स्थान दे दिया गया  
कि यदि मेरे पत्रों को निराल दिया जाय  
तो हारी शुद्धता टूट जाती है।

वायु के अधिकतर पत्र हिंदी में ही हैं।

यदि कभी पत्रों ने गुण संग्रहीत में लिखा, बात

उन्की ओर है महादेव माई इत्यादिने उंगोमी में  
प्रमेलिजा, तो उन सब पत्रों का हिंदी में अनुवाद  
करके हमें समावेश हुआ है। जब उंगोमी का  
प्रकाशन होगा तो उसी तरह सब हिंदी पत्रों का भी  
उंगोमी में अनुवाद करके समावेश होगा।

इस प्रकाशन में वायू के मानक को अध्य-  
यन करने का मन लगाया तो एक अनुपम अव-  
सर मिल गया। शिश्ना भी मिल गई, क्योंकि  
वायू के पत्रों में सब तरह का मिला पाया है। सब  
लेखकों की बात यह समझनी है कि इन सब  
में व्यक्तिगत आदेश, राजनैतिक और धार्मिक  
आदेश गोपी हैं वरन् एक महा जादेनशील  
एक साधु प्रभु के हैं। एक प्रहरे के उद्गार हैं,  
जो उन सब समाज के जीवन में उद्योगी हैं। शिश्ना  
उद्गार हैं। (अने जीवन में अवतरण करने योग्य  
हैं।



इसके छपाने का आरंभ मैं मेरा कोई हकल्प नहीं था।

पुत्री पुत्र वधु हरमा का आगार था। यह आगार  
पुत्री उच्छा माता। डौल मैंने उसको मान लिया।

इसी का फल यह प्रकाश है। छपाने का उद्योग  
डौल उद्योग दुर्गा प्रकाश में उलिया का है। पंडित  
विद्याजी रसिमनेमी कई उद्योगी प्रभाव दिखे।

पुत्रीनकारिके पूर्व पूर्व प्रत्यक्ष माया श्री  
श्री प्रचारितन दाह मेरे प्राचीन निगह है। उद्योग  
इस हारे पत्र व्यवहार को बहुत कुछ पत्र मा व्यकि-  
गत मे उद्योगिकाम देने का प्रभाव दिख। उद्योग  
उद्योग बहुत पत्र इस प्रकाश न के निदान दिखे।  
दाह हारे की मेरी मैत्री प्रभाव तत्त्व निरंतर  
पत्नी आरती है डौल वर उद्योग है। इसी माया  
मैत्री दुर्गा पत्नी वाजा में आकाशी के गरी  
निगदी।

हरेक उद्योग दूरा में था। काम-  
काजी का हूँ। मायाजी के कुछ इतिहास हारिनी

मे जो जिंदगी है उसमें कादा कालमद (का एव विशेष  
ब्याप है। कादा एव कायु पुत्र है। उन्होने  
इस संग्रही पुनिकालि (वद) पुत्र उल्लेख कृत भी  
किया।

छपाने का हेतु तो यह है कि लोको को वायु  
के मुख्य लक्ष्य को - मराणा (मारा) - समझने में  
सहायता मिले। या परमा हेतु है कि हो दो  
हो वयो के बाद यह संकल्पन अनुभव संग्रह  
बन जायेगा, क्यों कि वायु का उल्लेख गन्तवी  
हो दो हो सामवे बादरी अंतरालों में। यह  
मेरी समझ है। इसलिये भी यह संग्रह आव-  
श्य है।

मेरे जीवन में ईश्वर की यह दया रही है  
कि मैं वायु का प्रेम पात्र तो रहारी - यह संपर्क उर  
सामत कर रहा - उनके संपर्क से मैं बहुत कुछ सीखा हूँ।  
उनके द्वारा हर हाल में मैंने मिली भी मिली  
पाये। मराणा का यह प्रकाश उल्लेख उग्र हो रहा है।

੨੬ ਵਾਪਸੀ ਲਿਖਿ ਕੇ ਮੁਖੇ ਤੁਧੇ ਨਿਰਾਖਰੈ,  
ਕਮੇਲਿ -

" ਧਨ-ਨਗਾ ਕੀ ਵਿਸਮ ਧੁਆ  
ਤੁਧਾ ਹਾਥਿ ਮੇਂ ਤਾਕੀ ਹੈ

ਦੁਖੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਤੁਧੇ ਰੋਗੀ ਨੇ  
ਦੇਹ ਦੁਖੀ ਜਾਨੀ ਹੈ।"

ਬਲਰਾਮ ਦਾਸ





## Dedication

This Gift of Love from Bapuji ( *Bapu ki Prem Prasadi*) is dedicated to Bapu.

This is a collection of letters which Bapu wrote to me from time to time and also those which I wrote to him. The letters which Mahadevbhai and others wrote to me as well as those I wrote to them have also been included in this collection for the reason that they were written under Gandhiji's instructions, inspiration or with his consent. In fact, even the letters which I wrote to them were all meant for Bapu only. Therefore, considering all these as correspondence between Bapu and myself, I have included them in this publication since, if I were to exclude those letters, the entire connecting link would be broken.

Most of Bapu's letters are in Hindi. Whatever letters he wrote to me in English or on his behalf Mahadevbhai and others wrote in English, have been translated into Hindi and included in the Hindi edition of this collection. Similarly, now in English edition of this collection, the letters in Hindi have been rendered into English and included in this collection.

This bunch of letters provides an incomparable opportunity to the people to study the mind of Bapu. They get education as well, for Bapu's correspondence covers an assortment of many absorbing topics. What is of supreme importance is to understand this fact that whatever exhortations or directions that one finds here, be they individual, political or ethico-religious, are not just those of a great man or Mahatma but of a saintly man and the outpourings of a friendly soul. As such they are useful in the life of the common man, edifying and worthy of emulation by all in their daily life.

At first, I had no intention of bringing out these in print; but

my daughter-in-law Sarala was very insistent. Her insistence appealed to me and so I acceded to it. This publication is the outcome of that. It is Durga Prasad Mandelia's enthusiasm and labour that saw the book through the press. Pandit Viyogi Hari also gave several useful suggestions.

The late Shri Sudhir Ranjan Das, retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, was a very old friend of mine. He read the entire correspondence and suggested that some letters which were of a personal nature might be excluded. Accordingly, certain letters have not been included in this publication. My friendship with Justice Das extended over an unbroken period of 55 years : Such longstanding friendship is not something which comes by easily in life, even if one assiduously seeks it.

Above all, I am extremely indebted to Kaka Saheb Kalelkar. He occupies a special place among the few surviving chosen co-workers of Gandhiji. He has laid me in a deep debt of gratitude by writing the Foreword to this collection.

The purpose of printing this collection is to help people in understanding Bapu's heart — not the heart of a Mahatma but that of a human being. There is an added reason. Maybe, some hundred or two hundred years from now, this collection may become an invaluable treasure because the unfoldment of Bapu's real life will begin only after a century or two. This is my view.

It is indeed God's infinite mercy on me that I could become the recipient of Bapu's love in an abundant measure, that this relationship lasted 32 years, that I could learn a great deal from my association with him and that through him I could gain the friendship of great souls like Sardar Patel. Such is the bountiful grace of the Lord on me. I derive great contentment from the successful culmination of this venture because—

The spotless standard of Yama's troops  
Comes before my eyes be-dimmed by age  
And fighting a losing battle with diseases  
This mortal frame doth droop day by day.

*Chandrashekhar Bule*



## Preface

Gandhiji was very regular in his correspondence. It was by this means alone that he was able to maintain a hearty relation with innumerable people and was able to influence them to maintain high ideals in their lives. To enter with his heart into the individual life of the person with whom a relation was established and to help him in his development, having understood the individual's ability, his special nature and its depth, were the peculiar features of his correspondence. Hence Gandhiji's correspondence is as important as his writings and speeches. To understand the personality of Gandhiji, his correspondence is very useful. I have observed that his style of writing letters is also a typical one. Few world leaders have left behind them such a volume of correspondence as has Gandhiji.

I have always had the feeling while reading Gandhiji's correspondence that I was taking a dip in the sacred Ganges and sipping its waters. Always it was a purifying and pleasant experience for me to read his letters. The surrounding climate of its contents is purifying, life-sustaining and soothing.

Because of this I was very happy when Shri Ghanshyamdasji sent to me the entire bunch of his correspondence with Gandhiji. I began reading it with immense enthusiasm. As I went on reading, it became clear to me that this correspondence is not merely confined to the letters exchanged between Ghanshyamdasji and Gandhiji but also includes those exchanged between the late Mahadevbhai Desai, who was a close friend of Gandhiji, and Ghanshyamdasji. Apart from these, there is the correspondence with other friends of Gandhiji, many leaders and workers of the nation, Viceroys and politicians. There is also a description of their interviews. In short, a valuable history of the present times is to be found here.

Seeing this, I exclaimed, "Ah, if only this material had come into my hands five years ago!"

Today, I am 91. I am becoming increasingly forgetful. I go on forgetting so easily many a valuable fact. I have to record with sorrow today I am not able to dive so deep into this correspondence as I would have been able to, had this material reached my hands five years earlier. Yet I feel that the basic structure of my thinking on fundamental ideals has not changed in me. It is with its aid that I dare plunge into this ocean.

Before the year 1915, our people had experimented with several solutions for the attainment of Independence. We adopted the use of extremist methods. We also tried the path of petitions and prayers. We made efforts to make industrial progress. We started social reform movements for reforming society. We also fervently increased our faith in religion. We trod the path of swadeshi and boycott. Also we used bombs and pistols. We, Indians, tried with devotion, all those solutions that occurred to us or were suggested to us for the gaining of swaraj. Yet there was neither swaraj near at hand nor there was to be found a ray of hope. Some of our efforts, instead of removing the British Empire, only helped in strengthening it much more. The whole country was in utter despair when in 1915, Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa.

In South Africa where there was no Indian Government, nor Indian environment, Gandhiji with the help of uneducated, almost uncultured and hapless Indians, started a powerful satyagraha campaign and reaped success in it. We had heard and read about the activities of this leader of action, Gandhiji, and his new experiment. As soon as he returned to India, Gandhiji toured from the Himalayas to Rameshwaram, explaining to the people his vision of satyagraha. Those to whom swaraj was a cause were attracted towards him. Soon the heart beats of Gandhiji had their echo in the pulse of the people and both were tuned to the same wave length. The entire country, without the least hesitation, was ready to follow him. Gandhiji became a great representative of Indian culture and India's aspirations. He spoke the language of sacrifice, restraint and magnanimity which was also the confident language of the



Indian masses. The nation, seeing his uncommon humility and extra-ordinary self-confidence, became confident that he would surely achieve something.

Even as all rivers empty themselves into the ocean, becoming one with it, so too, all of us who dreamed of swaraj despite our different mental make-up, different backgrounds and different ways of life, went, and joined him. We gladly accepted his leadership and fully played our role in the activities directed by him.

Among the chosen few close workers who came in contact with Gandhiji at that time, the place of Shri Ghanshyamdasji is a special one.

This everybody knows that Shri Ghanshyamdasji is one of the few wealthy men of India. His primary field of work has always been in the industry. This too people know that he earned well and spent his wealth for good causes with open arms. Whenever there was need for money, Gandhiji without hesitation conveyed his desire to Shri Ghanshyamdasji who responded forthwith. Of the many sayings of Gandhiji, the following is very important: "The wealthy should not consider themselves to be masters of their wealth, but consider themselves as trustees and use it for the welfare of the society. Having the feeling that the wealth of the society is with him and that he is its trustee, the wealthy person should spend his wealth." Though, in principle, Shri Birlaji did not accept this teaching of Gandhiji he had taken this to his heart. The educational institutions, charitable guest houses and hospitals that are to be found all over India in the name of the Birlas are standing testimony to this. Apart from his own institutions, there are many others in the country that are run mainly from the charities of the Birlas. Almost all the institutions of Gandhiji have been benefited from the wealth of Shri Ghanshyamdasji. Perhaps none, apart from late Jamnalalji Bajaj, had contributed so much to the Institutions of Gandhiji as Shri Ghanshyamdasji. There is a famous story.

Gandhiji had come to Delhi. During the same period, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore also had reached Delhi to make collections for his Visva Bharati. Gurudev organised a programme of dance and music at different places and at the end of the programme asked for donations from the people. Gandhiji

felt unhappy on hearing this. That such a famous person as Tagore, in his old age, just to seek donations and that too a mere Rs. 60,000 was forced to go about organising programmes of dance and music was something which Gandhiji could not bear. He suddenly remembered Ghanshyamdasji. Gandhiji sent a message to him through Shri Mahadevbhai Desai that six of the rich men should each contribute Rs. 10,000 to Gurudev and save India from a sense of shame. It is needless to say that Shri Birlaji contributed the whole amount as a secret donation to Gurudev and made him carefree.

Not only did Gandhiji receive donations from Birlaji for his institutions but he made Birlaji contribute to others' causes as well. Who these persons were to whom Gandhiji made Birlaji give donations and to what extent Birlaji offered his wealth at the feet of Gandhiji will be known from this collection of his letters.

In a way, really this was a unique revelation of the relation between Gandhiji and Birla.

But one should not think that giving donations liberally was the only relation of Birlaji with the activities of Gandhiji.

There were two streams of work—both important—which Gandhiji had placed before the people, for getting swaraj. One was the constructive stream and the other political.

Gandhiji found that the high-low strata of society which was fundamental and the feeling of 'myself and himself' which was favoured by the cultural group were the two important factors on which the entire superstructure of Indian society rested. The result was that though peace, health and the principle of co-existence were to be found in our social life, yet we have been incapable of preserving national unity and independence. The entire history of India is a proof of this weakness of ours.

It was the chief aim of the constructive activities of Gandhiji to remove this our national weakness of the present and to create a new society full of life and all-round development in the future. Gandhiji placed before the nation 18 to 20 programmes such as Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, development of khadi and village industries and the propagation of the national language, for the achievement of the above two ideals. He used to say that the fulfilment of the above pro-



gramme would be indeed complete independence.

The programme chalked out was not one depending on servitude having its basis in charity and religion. It was a prophetic effort to unite India of the vast landscape consisting of many races, many faiths and many languages. Mental revolution leading to revolution of the life and from that to the total revolution in society was the programme chalked out. In this revolution Gandhiji gave a new meaning to old values.

Shri Ghanshyamdasji recognising the revolutionary possibilities of this programme accepted it with all his heart. Many letters in this collection reveal to us the deep faith of Birlaji in Hindu-Muslim unity and in the eradication of untouchability, and the efforts he made to bring them to success. If he had any difference of opinion with Gandhiji, it was perhaps to some extent about the economics of khaddar. In this he maintains his own individual opinion. Yet it attracts our attention that though having an independent opinion, he like a dedicated soldier, was spinning with the wheel. Not only this, he took the vow of khadi. Gandhiji was impressed with this nature of Birlaji, which loved discipline. To show his joy, Gandhiji presented Birlaji with a special type of spinning-wheel. He praised the thread spun by Birlaji and asked him not to abandon the sacred work which he had started.

Gandhiji had a speciality or distinction. He quickly recognised the good of men and made full use of them for the welfare of the nation. Gandhiji had more confidence in us than we had in ourselves. While moulding us, he made our weak faith strong. In the end, he was able to extract from us more work than was possible otherwise.

Though a rich man, Ghanshyamdasji was not affected by the illusion of wealth. Gandhiji had recognised this. He also had observed the skill of Birlaji in managing worldly affairs. To help him in the development of his personality, Gandhiji had shown him a path and in this we see the light thrown by a prophetic educationalist on many big and small aspects of the all-round human personality. This is a special characteristic of Gandhiji's letters.

More important than this is the fact that a picture of the modest, spotless life of Ghanshyamdasji can be seen in this collection.

It was no wonder that Ghanshyamdasji was attracted towards Gandhiji. Observing Gandhiji's dedication to religion, his forthright straight path and also the intensity of his search for truth, he became Gandhiji's best devotee. Birlaji considered it his duty to take on his shoulders the burden of any responsibility which Gandhiji had laid. And he fulfilled it with a full heart.

But he had dedicated himself enthusiastically and with a full heart to the political work of Gandhiji. In this collection of letters we are able to see the inside story of those events that happened behind the curtain between Gandhiji and the government at that time. The days of those times were such that something or the other was always happening in the camp of Gandhiji which created history. Ghanshyamdasji had a special and deep interest in this aspect of Gandhiji's activities. Having given his close attention to every small or big thing that occurred, by degrees he was considered to be one among the chosen few who knew well the political mind of Gandhiji. Soon he projected himself with confidence before the English statesmen as a reliable interpreter of the political mind of Gandhiji. He considered it his responsibility to convey to the English statesmen the way Gandhiji's mind worked and also he conveyed to Gandhiji the mind of the English statesmen. It was a self-imposed task which he accomplished with uncommon dexterity and success.

In this book the picture that presents itself to our mind of Ghanshyamdasji in a special way is that of a skilled statesman. This reminds us of Lord Krishna who went to the darbar hall of the Kauravas for a peaceful solution (of the demand of the Pandavas).

Having gone through this correspondence that went on for nearly 32 years, my first impulse was to advise Birlaji to divide it into three separate books. In the first one, only the correspondence between him and Gandhiji was to be included. How Gandhiji dived deeply into the many problems of his day, how he understood the subtle nature of each problem, how he showed the path to his personal followers and lastly how he showered his love on them, all these could be clearly seen by us from this part.

In the second book, only the correspondence of Birlaji with late Mahadevbhai Desai was to be included. This would have

enabled us to enjoy the fragrance of the personal and intimate conversation between two close friends.

In the third book, all the rest of the material could be included which may be important for history.

On reconsideration, I felt that this should not be done. Whatever material is here should be published together in the order in which it is found. Well, the size of the book may increase. If so, it may be bound in two volumes. This is not a book written for whiling away our leisure hour. This is an ocean which has a great historical value. When the future generations want to understand our times, then this source book would become very useful and interesting. Much material would be found packed in this book that would interest the students of history. This is a bunch of very valuable historical documents, whose full worth only the future generations will know.

To me, a Gandhi fan, this book has given transcendental joy.

The credit goes to my young friend, Shri Ravindra Kalelkar, due to whose labour I am able to write this preface at this age and in this state of health.

*Affectionately yours,*  
*Respectful Vande Mataram of*  
KAKA KALELKAR

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय







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1935



INDIA OFFICE,  
WHITEHALL,  
January 4, 1935

*Personal*

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I was glad to hear from you again. Many thanks for what you say about my speech. I am afraid we are not in agreement on the constitutional question. But it is a good thing that we should at any rate understand each other's point of view. It is evidently the safeguards that occupy the prominent position in your mind. To us here the impressive fact is to be so large an extension of self-government. The difficulty has been—and it has been a very great difficulty—to persuade people that the safeguards are sufficient, indeed that they are substantial safeguards and not merely paper safeguards. Of course there are some people here who would never be persuaded of this at all. But we have now, I think, succeeded in persuading the great mass of sensible people who are taking the whole problem very seriously and are genuinely anxious to do the right thing by India. The opinion which now prevails here as a result of our efforts was very well expressed the other day by one of our best political writers in the following words: "Side by side with the grant of free institutions, there is forming in the safeguards a new conception of the nature of the British Raj in India ... We both give liberty and under-write its risks." I hope you will appreciate the last phrase as one taken from the language of business. I wish that you and your friends would see the matter in this light. The general feeling here is one of prudence. You would probably call it caution. But certainly it is not one of illiberality. I am afraid this isn't realised in India. But I still hope that, in the end, things will turn out better than you appear to think at present.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Samuel Hoare



January 19, 1935

DEAR SIR SAMUEL HOARE,

I am grateful to you for your letter of the 4th January.

I fear I could not express myself clearly in my last letter or else you would not have said that the safeguards occupied a prominent position in my mind. I am not at all frightened of the safeguards. Even in the interest of India, certain safeguards shall be necessary. I would not say that the safeguards provided in the report are in the best interest of India. Besides, inasmuch as the report does not make any provision for the next step towards the ultimate goal, is no mean defect. But I did in my last letter that you have your own difficulties and I would be ignoring the realities if at this stage when the day is cast, I tried to persuade you to make such alteration in your plans as would satisfy the Indian opinion. What I therefore wanted to convey to you in last letter was this: whatever be the safeguards, they would not hinder the progress if there was genuine sympathy and goodwill behind them. I may accept what you say that the scheme reflects an act of prudence and not one of illiberality. But don't you think you would like the best in India to share your views and get up and say, "The constitution is not what we want but we will work it honestly for constructive purposes because where it is lacking in letter is to be made up in spirit?" I want your incoming "partner" to be personally by the partner in Britain that she wanted to do the right thing by India and that there was no lack of liberality. When I say this, I am not talking as people generally do with vague ideas but as a practical businessman who believes that given goodwill such a position is possible to be achieved and that it must be achieved. At times, I even feel that I should come to London to persuade you personally to share my views that with mutual understanding even bad safeguards could become insurance against risk whereas even good ones in the absence of human touch become a stumbling block in the path of peace and smooth working.

Your frank reply to my last letter has encouraged me to write all this and I assure you that you can always count on my service for any step that you take to create a cordiality which is at present lacking in the Indian atmosphere and which

is so necessary in the interest of both the countries who by destiny are bound together.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE SIR SAMUEL HOARE, KT.  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA  
LONDON

### 3

#### **Interview with Viceroy** (At 10 a.m.)

January 22, 1935

Started by putting me at ease. Said, "Say all what you want to say." I began with my interview with the Governor of Bengal and added I read the report twice. I said to myself at the end it could be very bad as well as very good. Depends on actual spirit in work and if atmosphere is good, safeguards could become inoperative. They could also be mill-stone round the neck. Essential, atmosphere should be cleared. Only one man, viz., Gandhiji who could take a bold step. If atmosphere not cleared, then fight will continue and will ruin both the countries. It should be your aim before you leave the shores of this country to create a suitable atmosphere to make the reform successful and thus help her in her march towards her goal. He said, "Do you really believe that such an atmosphere could be brought about?" I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "I have my difficulties. I have been giving a serious consideration to this matter for some time but there are many difficulties. First, Gandhi is a law-breaker." I said, "He is not and in a sense everyone potentially is. In his case, it is his religion to resist the evils. You can stop the Civil Disobedience by personal contact." He said, "Tell me frankly, do you think Civil Disobedience is to be revived?" I said, "I can say it is not up



in the air and I do not see it is coming for the next few years. No action is being taken by Gandhiji to revive it.” He said, “Are you sure?” I said, “Yes, as far as I could see.” And I added that Gandhiji is a religious man. Politics is only means to the ends. He said, “Yes, I know that. I told Mr. Gandhi when we met in Simla, ‘We both old men. Why can’t we co-operate? Only you should realise I am head of the Government.’ ” But he said, “There is another difficulty. If there is no compromise, in the meeting, then? We would be simply betraying our own supporters.” I said, “Meet on other issues.” He said, “Very difficult.” I said, “Give me another alternative. But if this position continues, there will be revolution.” He said, “Look at the difficulties created in my way by Congress. They have boycotted me. Have not signed their names.” I said, “No. No discourtesy meant. Only wanted to avoid infection.” He had a hearty laugh, “Do you think I was going to discuss politics with them?” Then he mentioned about the Silver Jubilee. He said, “This is going to hurt feelings of people in England.” I said, “You should look at, from the Congressmen’s point of view. They could have done it much worse.” He said, “Its ill-effect is there.” Then we talked about Bhulabhai. He said, “I do not know him. I dissolve the Assembly and am responsible for creating trouble for myself and yet these men have boycotted me. I have been very sore this morning.” I said, “You should forget this.” He said, “I am not a man who carries prejudice.” Then he said, “Look here this is what I will do. I will talk to Grigg and Craik. Do you know them?” I said, “No.” He said, “Well, would you mind talking to them in my presence?” I said, “Certainly not.” Then he said, “Please stay on.” I said, “I will stay on. This work is very important.” He said, “I am awfully grateful to you. Now, let me see if we could talk before the Governor of Bengal.” He got up and consulted his diary. Did not find date. Sent for A.D.C. A.D.C. said he was to come on the 12th. He said, “Too late.” I said, “I do not mind staying on.” He said, “Well, let us have first talk with my colleagues and then we may have next talk with the Governor. I wish Gandhi should have met me at Riza Ali’s Party. Then, it would have been better.” I said, “Gandhiji did not want to embarrass you.” He said, “There is no embarrassing. We can fight like



cats and dogs. But I carry no prejudice. It would be better if he could meet in some formal gathering." I said, "He does not like to embarrass the Assembly." But I kept quiet. I was just to talk to him whether I could arrange a formal gathering but did not like to mention until I had a talk with Gandhiji. He said, "Poor Hoare is in trouble. Manchester is acting immorally. They say, 'Take 5% off or our 60 votes are against you.'" And here is Mr. Gandhi and his followers creating trouble. I do not understand why there is fear of Dominion Status. Hoare is quite prepared to put in the word but not the other M.P.s nor the Cabinet." Again mentioned about the dissolution of the Assembly and his being boycotted by M.L.A.s, I said, "But don't you see you also have boycotted the head of the Congress?" He said, "No. I have boycotted him politically and not socially. But they have boycotted me socially." On my assurance, he said, "Yes, I will forget it." Talked about circular. He said, "There was nothing in it but look at the speeches of Kripalani and Kaviswar. His own followers put different interpretations." I said, "You must read his own interview appearing in today's *Hindustan Times*." He said, "I will." I said, "All this misunderstanding could be removed by personal contact. Mr. Gandhi does not want any demonstration in the Assembly. He wants constructive work and if you keep in touch with him, he will be able to influence the M.L.A.s." He said, "Can he influence Mr. Jinnah?" And then he laughed. Probably, he had some contempt for Jinnah. I said, "He can't control him." Then I said, "I should like to meet Lady Willingdon." He said, "Yes, you should fix up a time with Mievile." When I was going to Mr. Mievile's room, suddenly Lady Willingdon cropped in and surprised me by suddenly pouncing upon me. She said, "We have not met for long. Where have you been all this time? Look at the wonderful colour of your Pagri." She gave me no time to talk and went on. Said, "You must help me in my silver Jubilee fund. Get all your servants to subscribe an anna each." I said, "I will do my best." I am seeing her again.

CHARTWELL,  
WESTERHAM,  
KENT,

January 23, 1935

*Copy*

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I shall be very much occupied till the end of the Session, but it would give me pleasure if you would care to come down to lunch one day thereafter. The journey is not a difficult one. Perhaps, you would let me know how long your stay in England is.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Winston S. Churchill

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.

**Interview with Her Excellency**  
(At 12 a.m.)

January 25, 1935

She said she knew about my interview with the Viceroy but said there were difficulties, the chief being the diehards in London. "They might rebel against our talking to Gandhi. He is still a law-breaker. But has he got any influence?" I said, "Yes, very large." She was surprised. She said, "7,000 men came in Calcutta to meal and everyone ridiculed him." She had gone to one school where there were 700 girls and all of them disliked him. I said, "Your information is incorrect." "But is he really a Mahatma?" I said, "I don't know what you mean by the word but he is a very saintly man, no doubt." She said, "We knew him in Bombay for 5 years and he was not a Mahatma." All the same, she said, "I am very fond of him and so is my husband. But what is the object in seeing?" I explained. She said,

“But is there any bitterness in the country?” I said, “Yes, there is.” She was again surprised. She said, “You should have come yesterday to the Assembly. When the Viceroy left, no one cheered him. No one got up. That was very discourteous.” I explained and said, “They did not mean discourtesy.” She said, “Viceroy has not given up the idea of seeing Mr. Gandhi.” But simply wanted to explain the difficulties. She was sure that Congress had boycotted Silver Jubilee. She was disappointed that Gandhiji did not come at Riza Ali’s party. I think this was a plan pre-laid. She said, “Had I been told I would have assured that Gandhi would be no embarrassment.

#### WITH MIEVILLE

I reminded him that I was waiting for the conference with the Viceroy. He said he would remind him and has promised to fix up an interview. He asked whether I had met Craik. I said, “You talk to Craik first.” He pointed out that it was the Home Department after all which had to be tackled. He was very cordial and nice. “If, in any way, I could help you, don’t hesitate to write or ring me up.”

#### WITH BHORE

He knew about my conversation with the Viceroy and I again related at some length. He said, “The difficulty is, what if no compromise?” I again offered solution that there should be first of all personal touch and then Mr. Gandhi should go to England. He wanted to know how Mr. Gandhi’s mind moved. “If there was sincerity and goodwill, Mr. Gandhi may find a formula to work the constitution.” He was very much impressed. He said, “Viceroy was still sore about his being boycotted by the M.L.A.s.” I said to him that he should keep the Viceroy’s mind open. He said, “Viceroy is seriously inclined to meet him and I think he would meet some of these days at some social gathering but has not made up his mind.” Has promised to help. I think they have already made up their mind. Probably the first step would be a social gathering.



**Interview with Sir Henry Craik**  
(At 6.30 p.m.)

January 30, 1935

The man is about 60 and from his face appeared to be straight and honest. At the outset, he warmly thanked me for coming to meet him and said that he had heard from the Viceroy that I differed from house who said that the proposed reforms is worse than the Montague reforms. I said, "Yes, I did but my opinion is not un-qualified. I told the Viceroy that I had not come across one man who did not believe that the proposed reform was worse than the Montague reform and if I did not agree with them, it was because I felt that with goodwill and sympathy from both the sides, the proposed reforms could lead us towards our ultimate goal." I said, "I would not judge the report by its contents but by the spirit in which it would be worked. If there was no sincerity on the part of Britain, the safeguards would become really obstructive. On the other hand, if there was sincerity and sympathy, they would become real insurance against risk." He said, "I can assure you that there is genuine sympathy and goodwill. I am not saying this of Churchill and his followers but there is plenty of young blood among the Tories who are really sympathetic and feel that they are parting with great power. The safeguards are only against risk and I don't think they will ever be operative. It will be a great mistake if India rejected it. It is true that there is unsatisfactory aspect in the scheme. We have not got what even the Government wanted. Englishmen were frightened of the Congress utterances. Hence, you find the safeguards. But please assure Mr. Gandhi that there is genuine sympathy and goodwill on our part to do good by India and get Mr. Gandhi's co-operation." I replied, I may accept your assurance and take it that you are all sympathetic and want to do good. At the same time, when I sit at the feet of Gandhiji I find that he is most reasonable and equally eager to co-operate for the good of the country. Don't you think I have reasonabel cause for bewilderment if I feel that there is desire here and a desire there and yet there is a gap? Surely, there is some vital element lacking in your desire which precludes offering a hand

of co-operation to Gandhiji.” He replied, “I don’t understand what you mean. Do you want the Viceroy meeting Gandhi? His Excellency would very much like to see him but this boycott on the part of the Congress M.L.A.s has created certain complications. I wish you could do something in the matter because that would be helpful.” I said, “For this, you have to speak to Bhulabhai but you ought to judge the M.L.A.s not by what they have done but by what they have not. And I related the story of the M.L.A.s deciding not to attend the Viceroy’s speech.” He was very much impressed. I said, “Look at Gandhiji’s another instance of reasonableness. He deliberately accepted a cut of  $6\frac{1}{2}\%$ . That shows the compromising and constructive spirit of the man. One can very well imagine you, Sir Henry Craik—a man who broke heads of thousands and issued ordinance—walking with pistols and swords in your hands. But when I see you and hear you, I find that you are straight and an honest man. Similarly, you may be hearing all sorts of things about Gandhiji and his lieutenants and building clouds of suspicion in your mind. But you all forget that a man is a man. He has heart and sentiments. Have you ever tried to touch the heart of Gandhiji?” He said, “Yes, I quite agree that it has been very unfortunate but tell me what is Gandhiji’s view about reforms? He has never expressed his views in public. Has he expressed in private?” I replied, “Would you be surprised if I told you that he has not even read the report and this is just like him. He is accustomed to judge bigger things by smaller happenings. If he finds no generosity in smaller things, he would say to himself, ‘There is no hope of finding generosity in the report itself.’ But I can tell you something about his mind. People come and tell him that the proposed scheme is worse than the Montague reforms and he endorses it. And when I say to him that the proposed scheme could be worked successfully and to the fullest advantage of India, if there was sympathy and goodwill from both the sides, he endorses my views too. And there is no inconsistency in it. And he explains in this way, ‘When Montague introduced his reforms, he at least took a section of the people in his confidence and got their support. That showed that there was some earnestness on his part to meet Indian opinion. For the proposed scheme, the Government have not got any section with them. That shows they are indifferent towards achieving



confidence of the people. And so the proposed reforms prove to be worse than the Montague reforms.' You are talking of partnership but want to avoid every contact with your incoming partners. How does this prove goodwill or sincerity ? If you can prove that there is sympathy and goodwill and that it is due to the circumstances beyond your control that you cannot advance further, then Gandhiji would find a solution for you and offer his helping hand. He would then accept the reforms as something better than the present constitution. When asked to define what was swaraj, Gandhiji at one time defined, not through legal language, but by putting forward 10 or 14 points as symbolic of swaraj. You will thus see the reasoning of Gandhiji." He said, "This means that Gandhiji is not a practical politician." I said, "No. This only shows that he is the most practical man. And those who are not practical men make up their mind by the words put in gold print. He is quite different. And as I am a businessman, I say, in spite of every other opinion expressed, that with goodwill and sympathy, even the proposed reforms could lead us to our ultimate goal." He at once saw his mistake in remarking that Gandhiji was not a practical man. I continued, "The political education of the public has been before Gandhiji's advent, on destructive lines. We have been taught to think that politics is confined to putting forward destructive criticism of the Government. Gandhiji gave a new conception. He said, "Spin and weave, Remove untouchability. Units with the minority and all that." For the first time, constructive side was put before the public. But we have not yet learnt to admire the Government because you have given us no opportunity to do this. But all the same, this education is very dangerous. There is already a section growing up gradually which believes that even the best should not be achieved by constitutional means. They think that even swaraj achieved through constitutional means is no swaraj. Revolution to them is more essential than the swaraj itself. They will continue to preach hatred against the classes and the Government, whether be it alien or Indian. Gandhiji is fighting against this mentality. He would avoid bitterness at every step. Swaraj attained through violence is no good to him. He attaches more importance to non-violence than even to swaraj. His nearest lieutenants believe in his policy. But how long is Gandhiji to live ? It is essential that some settlement should be made in



Gandhiji's lifetime which may bring the Government and the people closer to each other. This would be the beginning of the new kind of education which would teach people to believe that the Government is their own institution, which should be mended and not ended. If the mode of this education was not immediately changed, a very serious harm would be done. A revolution of the bloody type may become an inevitable factor. And this would be the greatest calamity not only to India but also to England. Tories may say this would be India's funeral. I say it would be of both. Gandhiji is the only man who can get up by the right thing even if this may mean his unpopularity." He said, "I have not the least doubt that Mr. Gandhi is the most courageous man. I have no doubt about his sincerity and I admit he has checked the tide of communism. But supposing we can convince Gandhiji of our sincerity and get some sort of agreement with him, would the country follow him ?" I said, "Yes. I have not the least doubt. And he is capable of resisting injustice even though it came from his own men." He said, "I judge the Congressmen from what is written in the Press which is at present very bad." I said, "We are moving in vicious circles. Distrust begets distrust. You have created an atmosphere of distrust and thus proved that this theory of partnership by which you are swearing is a mere cant, when you don't want even to see your partners." He said, "Would you assure Mr. Gandhi that we are all very fond of him and that we are ready to give him our co-operation ?" I replied, "What is the use of my conveying the message when you hesitate to come into touch with him ?" He said, "Do you want this contact at once or after the Bill is passed !" I said, "No use delaying. The sooner we start educating public on different lines, the better for all of us." He said, "I tell you frankly that I am afraid of seeing him. I am a small brain and a simple man. He may be too big for me." I said, "I am sorry to hear this. When you admit that he is sincere and honest and if you want to approach him with sincerity and honestly, then you should be pleased to get his strength on your side." And I assured him that a frank and honest man of his type would appeal to Gandhiji most. He remarked, "Do you really believe that a man like myself would appeal to him ?" I said, "Yes, because you have impressed me as a straight man." He said, "Believe it that I have been 32 years in India and I call

myself an Indian. I have sided with Indian sentiments and aspirations and I will continue to do so. I do not know whether I am an honest man but I can say this much that I have always tried to be honest and straight. I will give my serious thought to what you say but convey to Mr. Gandhi that we wanted to have a much better constitution than what is proposed. We fought for it. Hoare fought for it but there is genuine difficulty on behalf of the Churchill group which could not be ignored. Young Tories are really anxious to do good by India. We are all sympathetic and sincere. Do not think there is any likelihood of the Labour party giving anything more. They may come into power but they would never be trusted." I replied, "We don't count on liberals or labours. Gandhiji is quite clear in his mind that if he has to deal with one, it is with the Tories."

Then we discussed Vallabhbhai. He expressed anxiety to meet him and I have arranged a meeting for him at my house on the 6th at 5 p.m. The Viceroy has asked me to see him on the 1st February. Bhulabhai tells me that after the Viceroy on Indo-British pact, Home Member came to him and congratulated him and remarked, "Although we pretend that we are in touch with the people, we are not. Would you, Bhulabhai, put us in touch?" Bhulabhai evaded the reply.

The sum total of my impressions is this, "They are very keen to come in personal touch but are still hesitating. They have realised that Gandhiji is courageous and honest and that if anyone could stand up and make compromise on constitution, it is Gandhiji. And this has kindled a new hope in them. I think their mind is working in the right direction.

## 7

INDIA OFFICE,  
WHITEHALL,  
January 30, 1935

*Personal*

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your further letter of the 19th January. It contains expressions which I was glad to read. It does seem a



difficult business to persuade India of our real goodwill towards the country. I am convinced there is a vast amount of it. Even the great majority of those who are opposing our present policy are animated by a feeling of goodwill according to their lights. That is to say they are genuinely concerned with the well-being of the common people of India and they resist our proposals because they honestly do not think them conducive to that end. If general assurance will not avail, then we must hope that you and your friends will ultimately find the practical evidence of sympathy and goodwill that you seek in your experience of the new constitution when it is actually working. After all, we say in this country, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I tried in a recent speech at Oxford to give a sketch of the new constitution as I imagine it working, and send you a copy in case it interests you to read it. You will see that I developed there some of the ideas expressed in my last letter to you. I have to maintain what you call the human touch with more than one school of thought. But I shall try to say more of what is in my mind as sympathetically as I can when I speak on the Second Reading of our Bill next week.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Samuel Hoare

## 8

### **Interview with the Viceroy** (At 10.30 a.m.)

February 1, 1935

He was unwell recently and therefore was looking very depressed. He remarked that he was working too hard and was very old and therefore seedy. Asked me if I saw Craik. I said, "Yes." "What impression did you leave?" I said, "I don't know but I thought I left a good impression and he is going to meet Vallabhbhai." He said, "This is good." Then he began with the Indo-British pact. He said, "Look at what has happen-



ed yesterday (it happened two days before) ! It indicated nothing but Anti-British spirit. If this is the spirit, then what is more to be said?" I said, "It is not necessarily an anti-British spirit. The pact was concluded in a wrongful manner. Runciman consulted Lancashire interests at every step. Here, Bhore even refused to meet the deputation from the Federation Chambers. We strongly protested. Mody-Clarelees pact was disapproved by the country and yet the Government signed the pact. This showed desire to flout public opinion." He said, "Bhore has explained it to me that nothing was given away. I would have fought and anything been given away. I said," "I may admit that it was an eye-wash to placate Lancashire and so nothing was given away but the method was wrong. It should have been done with public consent." He said, "Of course, it was an eye-wash to Lancashire. Hoare concluded it to get 60 votes of Lancashire and there was nothing wrong in it and the matter was fully explained to the House in Bhore's speech which has full of arguments. After that, the Assembly should have realised that they were taking a serious action." I said, "It is not always the arguments but instinct and sentiment that counts and this aspect should not have been ignored." He said, "I don't understand this sort of Indian mentality. Ottawa pact benefited India a lot. Why are they crying against it?" I said, "But should not we be the judge of our own interests and not the Government. If, however, you feel that Assembly has taken irresponsible step then you can prevent such occurrence in future by personal contact." He warmed up at this and said, "Am I avoiding personal contact? I am responsible for bringing the Congressmen in. Hoare did not like it. I knew that there would be trouble and yet I have got them in. But what have they done? They have not even signed their names." I told him that Gandhiji did about the non-attendance of the M.L.A.s at the time of Viceroy's speech. He said, "I would not care had not attended. If they wanted to show discourtesy, it is their business." I said, "Discourtesy is not in the blood of Gandhiji, Mr. Patel or Bhulabhai. There are some other reasons which I had explained for their not signing." He said, "Whatever be the reasons, I take it is as an insult." I said, "You should not." He again repeated, "I do." I said that even this could be smoothened by personal meetings with Gandhiji. He said, "Was Gandhiji not

responsible for the Silver Jubilee resolution?" I said, "He was." And he said, "This again is an insult to His majority." I said that I had explained this too in my previous interview but I would leave it to Gandhiji himself to explain. He again repeated, "How can I meet these men when they treat me as leper which I am not." I said, "Probably, Bhulabhai would see you in connection with business but it is the social relation that they want to avoid." He said, "My dear man, what was I going to do at the social function? I was not going to influence their mind. I am an old man, head of the Government and representative of the King and they should not insult me like this." He thought what I meant was that Bhulabhai was going to write his name and then see him and this cheered him up. But I disillusioned him. He said, "If he does not sign his name, I cannot meet him." I said, "These personal matters should not be brought in. National policy can only be decided with wider vision. If the present atmosphere continues, then the anti-British feeling would continue to increase resulting in more hatred, which will be most disastrous to both the countries. We should check this feeling without the least delay. There must be a proper understanding between the ruler and the ruled so that leaders like Gandhiji and his lieutenants may begin to teach people to treat the Government as their own institution." He said, "Why don't you say all these things from the public platform?" I said, "My mission is to convert you if you create an atmosphere properly, Gandhiji would say many good things from the public platform. After all, I am not a politician." He said that he thought that I was a Congressman and a politician. He said, "But people can never praise the Government until the present rule is ended. Probably, they would feel different under the new constitution." He again repeated that he was very fond of Gandhiji. He knew him and he wanted to see him. Then he said, "But how can I do when I am being insulted. The King is being insulted. I am an old man. Can do a lot of good in England. But the happening of the last two weeks are having a very bad effect on my mind. It would be very sad if I had to say that India is not playing the game with me." I said that I was very sad to see him so distressed. In the conclusion, he said that he would have a talk with Sir Henry Craik and also the Governor of Bengal and might invite me again to talk. Today



he was very depressed, which may be due to his recent illness. He was also sore, distressed and also irritated. He was feeling very much hurt as he felt he was genuinely insulted. He felt as if he had done lot of good to India and was receiving no reciprocation. When I told him that how could he avoid personal contact with those whom he called partners, he again repeated that it was the other side that was avoiding it. He remarked, "Why do people speak lies by telling that this constitution is worse than the Montague reforms?" I said, "They don't speak lies. They really believe it." He said, "You don't mean this?" I said, "Yes, I mean it." He said that Hoare was in great distress. Manchester would give him a lot of trouble. This ended the talk.

My net impression is that the policy of establishing personal contact is being pressed from all sides but the Viceroy being an old man feels "Insult" very sorely and from the time being it has come in the way. I think he should not be allowed to feel "Insult". I had suggested in the very beginning that exception should be made in the case of Bhulabhai and he should be allowed to write his name. I still hold the opinion that he should be granted this exception and may be that it would create a good impression, if Bhulabhai wrote to the Private Secretary explaining that no discourtesy or insult was meant. And this may be followed by writing his name purely to make the Viceroy feel that "no personal insult is meant".

## 9

February 1, 1935

MY DEAR BAPU,

Immediately after you left, I heard from the Home Member and the Viceroy, and the enclosure is the report of my interviews with them. I am not good in pen pictures especially in English and so am not sure whether this will give you correct impression. But I will supplement it by saying that with the Home Member, I had more of the talking, while with the Viceroy, the latter had the most. The Home Member was very



cordial. Although not a clever man, he appeared to me to be very straight and frank. He has no prejudice against anyone and I would not call him anti-Indian in any sense. He may be called an administrator if that convey a sense of die-hardism but if he so, it is quite honest. On the other hand, the Viceroy unlike the previous interview, was a little sore this time. He has genuinely felt hurt by Congressmen abstaining from writing their names and I wonder whether Bhulabhai should not reconsider the position in respect of himself apart from the Congress M.L.A.'s just as you were thinking of writing to the Home Member about the C.D. movement, I wonder whether Bhulabhai should not assure the Private Secretary that no personal insult was meant and if necessary, this should be followed by his writing the name, simply for the reason that it was treated as an insult. I may have a further talk atleast with the Governor of Bengal and after that, I will leave the things to take their own course. It may take a little more time but I think that the things by themselves will be corrected with patience in course of time. Write to me what you think of it. It is good that the Home Member meets at any rate Vallabhbbhai.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA

10

WARDHA,  
February 4, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am in receipt of your letter. Your description of both the interviews reads well. I feel there is nothing that can be usefully done at the present juncture. All the same I feel tempted to write to Sir Henry Craik, but if at all I do I shall forward the letter to you and if after perusing the same you do not like it,

then don't send it on. It will not be possible for Bhulabhai to inscribe his name in the Visitors' Book. We can achieve nothing by abandoning the Golden path. A polite word from Bhulabhai should be considered adequate enough to meet the situation.

The Home Member's courtesies and his good wishes are purely personal, while the policy unfolded in the Joint Parliamentary committee report is the rulers' own. The rulers have been pursuing a policy that does not contain an iota of friendliness. On the contrary, there is a lot of the reverse thereof. I do not hope for anything good emerging from it. As it is, any sort of constitution could be found workable for a length of time if the rulers' policy underwent a sea change. At present something is being imposed on us through sheer brute force. Nobody considers the scheme to be good enough, but you may stick to your own views in this regard. I am writing this rather lengthy letter just in order to tell you that I fail to detect a ray of hope peeping out of the prevailing climate. My own optimism has nothing whatever to do with it and thrives independently of the present conditions of utter darkness. It is almost eternal and it sprouts from the well-spring of our own dedication to Truth. Everything else is immaterial.

Just what kind of attitude Bhulabhai should adopt may be decided in consultation with Vallabhbhai.

Just while penning this my enthusiasm for writing something to the Home Member is ebbing away, through I cannot explain to you, why.

The dates might have arrived by now.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

## 11

**The Home Member Came to Tea at 5 p.m. Vallabhbhai  
Was Already There.**

February 6, 1935

They began with courtesy talk but both hesitated to open the subject. I butted in and this gave the Home Member a



chance to reaffirm what he had told me that Englishmen were sincere and cordial as far as they could go. Vallabhbhai pointed out that there was room for great improvement. He related how a number of buildings including his residential quarters in Bardoli were still in the possession of the Government. They were neither being repaired nor well-kept. He related how a number of peasants having lands in British India and also in Baroda State were disallowed entry into the former territory. His own secretary, Mr. Manilal Kothari was not allowed to come in. Gandhiji's secretary, Mr. Joshi was given a similar treatment. He said that these things were telling on the minds of the people and were not helping in restoring normal conditions. The Home Member said he did not know all these things and asked if the matter was brought to the notice of the Bombay Government. Vallabhbhai replied that it was but without any result. He added that the Congressmen were not influenced by racial animosity. He was picked up in the midst of night and was locked up for three years. His brother who died owing to hard work in the Assembly had to be cremated without his seeing him. He said that this was all very unfair but it had not left the slightest trace of bitterness behind. So long as both the sides recognised sincerity and honesty of purpose, there was no reasons to fear racial bitterness. Vallabhbhai pointed out how poisonous articles were being written by the *Times* and strongly protested against the suggestion made that Indian politicians were moved racial bitterness. There came the subject of Gaffar Khan and Vallabhbhai said that it was monstrous conviction. The Home Member agreed and said why an appeal was not made. He then asked Vallabhbhai's views about the present constitution and also why the latter thought that it was more than the Montague reforms. Vallabhbhai said that the finance was so mortgaged that there was hardly any room for reducing land revenue or abolishing the dark evil. The Home Member replied, "Surely, the gap can be made up by some substitute tax." Vallabhbhai said the country was already over-taxed. But this argument against the present scheme did not convince the Home Member. He was in great hurry to go because suddenly the Viceroy's cabinet meeting was summoned. The talk lasted only for 45 minutes. It was all very cordial and both parted as good friends. Just before leaving, the Home



Member said he was so pleased with the talk and was very disappointed that he could not continue it further but would like to resume when Vallabhbhai returned to Delhi. Meanwhile, he has asked Vallabhbhai to give him a note of all the points raised during the conversation so that he may write to Brabourne and see if something could be done. I told him when he was departing that I had a talk with the Viceroy and he asked me if I was able to get any concrete result. I told him that I would see him and relate the whole story. He has asked me to come after the 12th. I told Vallabhbhai after he left that although I agreed with Gandhiji that nothing concrete was to be achieved, I could not believe that all this politeness and eagerness on the part of the Government officials was a hollow courtesy. Six months back, the Home Member would not dream of coming to see Vallabhbhai. Now, he is expressing desire to continue the talk, and asking Vallabhbhai to give him a note. The Viceroy is talking and promising to talk further. All this means that there is some change inside and it would be a mistake to ignore it.

Bhulabhai has created a grand impression on here. His opponents as well as followers praise him unanimously. The Treasury benches and the European members are all equally influenced. Some say that he is treated with greater respect than even Motilalji. One of his followers, a fussy simple man, remarked that Motilalji unnecessarily offended people whereas Bhulabhai showed consideration to everyone. So, he was getting more popular than even Motilalji. This is all beyond expectations and very satisfactory.

I must confess that all those who argue that the present Bill is worse than the Montague reforms have not yet convinced me. Vallabhbhai when he said this to the Home Member was not at all convincing. I fear the conclusion drawn is not wholly impartial. "If this Bill can be dropped, we may get something better," this is at the root of such a conclusion. But I am thoroughly convinced that the Bill is not going to be dropped or altered. I am reliably informed that Viceroy's cabinet unanimously recommended recently to the Secretary of State that Burma be not separated as Indian and British opinion both disliked it. But the Secretary of State turned down the recommendation. Probably, his reasoning was that once they began changes

in J. P. C. report, no one knew where it would end. It is a question of prestige. But I also feel that the Government must and shall have to come to some agreement with the Congress about the future working wheather today or a year hence. It is advisable therefore to keep an open mind about the future course. Once we make up our mind in one way, it will be difficult for us to change it in opposite direction. I am, however, not getting impatient and am not reading in the atmosphere more than I can reasonably see.

The fuss made by Viceroy about the M. L. A. s not writing their names in his book is, I think, confined to himself. The silver Jubilee resolution too is not very strongly criticised by others. The Indo-British pact on the other hand is causing a lot of trouble to the Secretary of State and what has been lost in the Assembly will be recompensated to Lancashire, by removing 5% surcharge on her cloth on the ground of budget prosperity.

I do not think it is necessary at this stage for Bhulabhai to write his name in the Viceroy's book. I do not think this is the only obstacle in the way for the Viceroy meeting Gandhiji. The real obstacle is the fear of Churchill and the doubt entertained as to the result of such meetings. But some day, "writing the name" may become necessary and I find from Bhulabhai and Vallabhbhai that there would not be the slightest difficulty in meeting the Viceroy's wishes if this was the only difficulty. Therefore, nothing more has to be done on this score.

## 12

AS AT CONGRESS OFFICE,  
AHMEDABAD,  
February 7, 1935

DEAR SIR HENRY CRAIK,

With reference to our coversation last evening, I am sending herewith a note on the administration of Ordinances in Gujarat and copies of correspondence with Mr. Maxwell, Home Secretary, Bombay.

As for Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's case, I have explained the facts to you, and I trust the matter will receive your best consideration.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Vallabhbhai Patel

HON'BLE SIR HENRY CRAIK, BART  
K. C. S. I., I. C. S.  
NEW DELHI

Encl. 1

13

**Note on the Administration of Ordinances in Gujarat**

NEW DELHI,  
February 7, 1935

The following institutions are still under ban and the buildings are in the possession of Government since three years:

- (a) 1. The Bardoli Ashram buildings including my own residential quarters, the Technical Institute of Khadi, a Dispensary and other like buildings.  
2. Similar Ashram building in Sarbhan in Bardoli Taluk.  
3. Madhi Ashram buildings in Bardoli Taluk.  
4. A big technical school for the education of boys of the forest tribes known as the Vedchhi Asram in Bardoli Taluk.  
5. The Swaraj Ashram buildings in the city of Surat.  
6. The Anavil Boarding School (educational institution for the Anavil boys) situated in Surat and of which Mr. Bhulabhai J. Desai is one of the Trustees.  
7. Similar boarding buildings for the education of Patidhar boys in Surat.



8. The Vallabh Vidyalaya buildings situated in Buchasan in the Kaira district (for the technical education of boys of backward classes in that area).
  9. The Rashtriya School buildings in Sunav in Kaira district.
  10. The Khadi Karyalaya buildings in Ras in Kaira district.
- (b) 1. My own Secretary, Mr. Manilal Kothari was served with an order of externment from British India immediately after his release from jail. He is the Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee since about 15 years. He is also the Secretary of the B. B. & C. I. Railway Employees Association as also of the Gujarat Postmen's Union. Both these are recognised associations under the Trade Unions Act and the head office of both of them is in Ahmedabad. It is now about a year since the externment order has been served on him and therefore he is still unable to enter British India.
2. A similar order has been served on Mr. Chhaganlal Joshi, one of Mahatma Gandhi's Secretaries. He is also unable to enter British India since about a year.
  3. Several such orders have been served on many of my co-workers including even some of the peasants who have lands both in British India as well as in the adjoining Native State areas.
- (c) In several cases, passports to Europe have been refused to persons convinced of Civil Disobedience or to people suspected of having taken part in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Vallabhbhai Patel

**Interview with the Governor of Bengal**  
(At 11.30 a. m.)

February 15, 1935

He was very busy. There were interviewers waiting after we. So, I apologised for encroaching on his time but explained that as it was due to him that I approached the Viceroy, I felt that he should know of the result. He said, "I know you at once come to the point and so I do not fear meeting you." I related how I met the Viceroy twice. He interrupted and said, "You also met Lady Willingdon." I said, "Yes, her also." He said, "Good that you did." I continued, "I also met the Home Member and had good talk with all of them. The net result is this. Home Member had a meeting with Vallabhbhai and has expressed a further desire to continue conversation. But beyond this, the result is not encouraging. Viceroy at the first meeting was very nice and cordial but at the second, was rather sore and talked mostly about the M.L.A.s not writing their names in his book." The Governor said, "He has overworked then but is better now." "But," the Governor remarked, "I am surprised at the impression that you brought. In fact, my information is that they were all very much impressed with your talk and are not inactive." I said, "Somehow or other, I formed the impression that there is a feeling of helplessness. They are engrossed with the day-to-day administration but are indifferent towards the wider question. The Viceroy is brooding over the omission on the part of the Congress M. L. A.s to write their names but ignores the restraint behind many other omissions. No discourtesy was ever meant. But the Viceroy ought to recognise that he boycotted Gandhiji long before this small incident and he should not expect Congressmen and other Indian to show any social consideration towards him until the atmosphere is improved. Of course, Bhulabhai was always ready to meet the Viceroy and discuss business but could avoid only social relations." The Governor was impressed and by not making any comment showed his tacit agreement with me. After again emphasising that my reading of the situation was not correct, he said that he felt that the Congress M. L. A. s should improve



their behaviour. They called Craik a mumblor. He said that the Home Member can not speak up because he gets fits of cough and he viz. the Home Member was bit sore that the M.L.A.s should have called him a mumblor. And when Sarkar spoke out, the Congress M.L.A.s complained that he was rude when they themselves are not always polite. I said, "Sarkar should not try to imitate the back-benchers but has to imitate Desai." I added that Sarkar had made very bad impression everywhere. He agreed with my remarks about him. In cotinuing the conversation, we touched the reforms and I said that I hoped it was realised that there was unanimity among all the parties on the point that the proposed constitution was worse than the Montague reforms. I was the only man who thought that it could be a distinct advance if there was a proper atmosphere and a friendly spirit behind it. He said, "Yes, I know these views but I do not understand the logic." I said, "The logic is this. There are people who think that if the Bill is dropped, anything would be better than this." He interrupted and said, "This is a practical political view. But it does not argue against the merit of the constitution which is, as I sincerely believe, a great advance." I said, "And there is Gandhiji who judges the things by the prevailing atmospher and comes to the conclusion that it could not be an advance." He said, "It is just like Gandhiji but this again is a practical view." I said, "When people in England say that reform could be worked, they ought to know in what spirit it could be worked. There could be two positions. Congress would capture every seat and form ministries in every province." He interrupted, "Do you think Congress will be returned in majority in every province?" I said, "I decidedly think so except in the Punjab and Bengal and after forming ministries, either they work it in a friendly spirit and advance by evolution or work it with a view to wreck it, expose its weakness, create greater discontent and embarrass England in order to wrest further advance." I asked which position would he like? He said that lot of constructive work will have to be done in the province and when Congress would sit down to work, it would realise the tremendousness of the work. It will also realise that it could wield immense power. This will produce a sense of responsibility. I said, "If it satisfies you that no agreement with the Indian leaders is necessary and that even



if they start with hostility, they will end with friendship, then I think nothing more is to be said. Let the nature take its own course. But let me tell you that if you think the imposition of the reforms without consent as you intend to do, will lead to mutual friendship, then you are terribly mistaken." He said, "I would not be satisfied if they work in anything but friendly spirit." I said, "If you are not satisfied, then you must make some agreement with the Congress. You are talking of partnership but where is the partnership? You refuse to see your partners. You refuse to trust them. You refuse to create atmosphere of partnership. This will not help. Look at the Trade Pact. Whatever be its good or bad points, it was turned down simply because you had tried to impose it on us. If therefore you desire that the hostility between the two countries should cease, you must work for the object and bring about an agreement and begin with establishing personal contact." He said, "but we are establishing personal contact with the Congress M.L.A.s everyday and if you have got this impression that we are not going to meet the other Congress leaders, you are very much mistaken." I said, "Well, merely meeting the Congress M.L.A.s won't help. You have to meet the bigger men with a view to come to some agreement." He was interested to learn how Vallabhbhai was guiding the party from the Visitors' gallery. I told him how I had at one time intended even going to England and consulted Gandhiji. I said, "He did not dislike by going but was not very much enthusiastic." The Governor interrupted, "Are you going?" I said, "I want to consult you. Would it be of any use?" He kept quiet for a few minutes and then said that so long as the Bill was before Parliament, there would be much a rush of business that nothing was possible to be done and so going would be useless. I said, "Do you mean that it will be useful if I went after the Bill is passed?" He again seriously said, "Yes. Definitely". "Do you mean that you want to do something after the Bill is passed?" He said, "Yes, but keep it to yourself." "When would the Bill be passed? In September?" I asked. "Much earlier than that. In July." I said, "This means that I should reach there just about a month before." He said, "Yes". I said, "Gandhiji has promised me letters of introduction to various friends but not to Sir Samuel

Hoare because he felt that this would embarrass him.” “But you know all these men.” “Yes, I know many of them but his letter would mean that I could talk with some amount of responsibility.” He said, “That is good.” I said, “Will you too give me letters if I decide to go there?” “Oh yes. Certainly.” Then I got up and said before departing, “Let me tell you again that do not try to impose this constitution without making an agreement and friendship with India.” He said, “Yes, I have this in mind.” Then I said, “I am carrying away this impression that you have desire to do something after the Bill is passed and that you want me to go there sometime before that and that you will give me letters.” He said “Yes, but keep all these things to yourself.” I said, “You can always trust me to keep secret.” He was very frank and it is now quite clear that they have some plans. Probably, they do not want to get into trouble with Churchill as long as the Bill is before the Parliament. But they want definitely to do something and come to some agreement with Gandhiji after the Bill is passed. What shape that agreement will take and how will they propose is still a matter for conjecture but I think it is quite satisfactory to know that they have got something in mind. After having a talk with him, I am encouraged to think that I should go there sometime in May but the final decision will be taken after consulting Gandhiji.

\* \* \*

He said he was to talk to the Viceroy again about my talk with him.

## 15

February 15, 1935

MY DEAR BAPU,

The enclosure contains copies of a letter from Sir Samuel Hoare just reached, my reply to it and the notes of my interview with the Governor of Bengal. The Governor now tells



definitely that there would be some overturn for establishing some point of agreement after the Bill is passed. You also had said that if they did anything, it would be after the passage of the Bill. It is useless to make any conjectures as to what they would do. But for the time being, it is quite satisfactory to learn that they have a plan. The letter from Sir Samuel Hoare is equally frank and cordial but evidently, he does not want to say more than what the circumstances would permit. He may bear in mind what the Governor tells me. To enter into a pact after the Bill is passed would be a difficult job for the Congressmen but let us hope that your resourcefulness will be able to help at the proper time. Please tell me your own reading after this and also any instruction for me.

I had gone to the Governor today to end the talk but I feel now that we should continue it in a natural way. There will be probably another meeting between Vallabhbhai and Sir Henry Craik either at my house or at some other place as may be settled between Bhulabhai and the Home Member. As the Home Member had expressed a desire that he should be informed about Vallabhbhai's arrival Bhulabhai is going to speak to him tomorrow and fix up a time if the latter expressed a desire to talk. In this natural way, the things will continue until there is any further development. There is neither impatience nor indifference on my part. I hope you approve of it.

With reference to your feeling as to whether you should or should not write to the Home Member, I think it is no use anything until the matter terminates one way or the other. There is no question just now of Bhulabhai signing his name in the Visitors' Book but if at any time, it is definitely told by the other side that this was the only obstacle in the way, then, of course, I am told that there would be no difficulty. But when the atmosphere changes, this petty thing would cease to assume any importance.

I am still sticking to my views, and the more I talk with my friends, the more I get confirmed in it, that it is not correct to say that the proposed constitution is worse than the Montague, reforms. Of course this could be made worse, even tyrannical, but this could as well be made better and far better than the existing position and I would therefore ask you to keep an open mind about the truce. If there is no agreement with you,



then, of course the proposal stands condemned. But until then, don't you think you should keep an open mind about it?

Now, what about my going? After the talk with the Governor, I am inclined to go. But the last word rests with you.

I have received the dates and they were all very good. I am consuming a good quantity every day.

Rajendra Babu has evolved a formula for the communal settlement. It has been agreed upon by Jinnah. It is based on Joint electorates and no change in the seats and the franchise is to be differential so as to reflect a correct proportion of the two communities in the constituencies. He is in close touch with me and I have advised him to get Ramanand Chatterjee and J.N. Basu here to talk about Bengal rather than go to Calcutta. I fear the atmosphere in Bengal is not good and so it is better to keep the venue in Delhi but the real difficulty would be about the Sikhs. Hindus even in the Punjab may be reconciled. But it is a hard job. Panditji, I fear, will not be helpful as usual.

If in anything you feel that I have made a mistake, please correct. I am only an amateur in this line but I hope I know your views and reasoning fully well.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA (C.P.)

## 16

*By Air Mail*

February 15, 1935

DEAR SIR SAMUEL,

Many thanks for your letter and the copy of your speech which I have sent for reproduction in the Local English daily "The Hindustan Times".

I quite understand your reasoning which is this : "We are giving a substantial advance to India but it is not fully realised

now. The taste of the pudding is in its eating and the Indians will realise our sincerity and goodwill and the volume of the advance when they work the reforms." With this feeling on your side and with personal contact, establishment of mutual understanding should be an easier task still. But, evidently, you cannot say more at this stage than what the circumstances permit. I would only say that a Partnership Deed is a document signed by both the partners. The present Bill is signed only by one. I submit that whether today or at a later stage, you must get the signature of your partners on the Partnership Deed if it is to bring forth happy results. The greatest complaint against the Lancashire Pact was that it was thing imposed upon and not one agreed upon. I hope you will avoid that situation in respect of the Reforms. Without boring you further with my views, I would have the matter at that and hope for the best.

I need hardly add that I quite realise the earnestness and sincerity in your letter and this encourages me to entertain a hopeful view.

With the kindest regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE SIR SAMUEL HOARE, KT.  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA  
LONDON

February 21, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I hope you approve of my practice in sending the papers through Jajuji instead of sending with a messenger. I understand that you were recently in Calcutta and not in Wardha. But if you suggest any other Post Office, I can adopt your suggestion. I personally thought Jajuji would be the best. I do not think, however, that in future I will have to send any more

communication because the talk with all the important men from the Viceroy to the Governor is now more or less at an end. When I go to Calcutta I will again have a talk with the Governor. Meanwhile I am awaiting the instructions of Bapu as regards my future plans.

For Chill Blains, I had suggested Rosin, Wax and Ghee.

I will try to get Miss Roydon's speech and will be interested to read the same.

Panditji (Malaviyaji) is here and he has turned down Jinnah's and Rajendra Babu's formula. I have personally advised Rajendra Babu that (if the Mohammedan leaders accept the formula which, I fear, they will not) we must get the Hindu masses to accept it even if the Hindu Sabha leaders maintain an opposition. I am quite optimistic about the results, if only the Congress will take up a definite attitude. Even the Hindu Sabha could ratify the formula in its session provided the Congress would work for it. I hope Bapu would approve of such a move. Enough mischief has been done by communalists. It may be tolerated so long as the Mohammedans showed no inclination for a settlement. But if they indicate their desire, then it is up to the Congress leaders to tell the Hindus frankly what is in their best interest and I have not the least doubt that the latter would follow.

*Yours cordially,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
CARE MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA

WARDHA,  
February 24, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter has arrived. Why did you mention in your letter the fact of setting up a post office of your own choice? This



effectively destroys the very purpose of setting up your own post office.

As regards the future programme, Bapu is of the opinion that the proper time for your going is not yet, that it would be better to go after the Bill is passed. For the present you should concentrate on giving finishing touches to the task you have undertaken and have brought to the present stage of fruition. However, Bapu is fully convinced that the prevailing climate does not at all encourage a feeling of optimism. In his view they have cultivated a tradition of indulging in sweet talks; they are not betraying any inclination to effect a change in the system. This, however, does not mean that you should give up your own hope of something emerging from all that has been going on. You will make your own adjustments in your own view as dictated by reason. Till then you would do well to pursue the matter in keeping your own assessment of the situation. Bapu's view of the matter is entirely his own and is based on a sense of the situation. At the same time it does not affect his ultimate optimism in the least. What he seeks to emphasise is a total lack of any sign that would justify a feeling of optimism in the present conditions.

What you say about Malaviyaji has been duly noted. In response to a letter from Rajendra Babu, Bapu has quite clearly told him that he would endorse anything coming from your side. In that letter he made a mention of you, saying that only your own efforts to persuade Malaviyaji are likely to be crowned with success. And now Vallabhbaiji has also arrived here. But it must be clearly understood that Bapu is in complete agreement with what you say in this regard.

Bapu insisted that this letter must be written in Hindi, so it has been written in Hindi. Would you mind my Hindi?

I hope you are doing well physically.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

February 25/26, 1935

PUJYA BAPU,

Poor Rajendra Babu is quite unnerved. Though both Rajendra Nath and Nanak Chand have approved his formula, there is a gulf yawning between the Sikhs on the one hand and the Bengal Hindus on the other. Pandit Malaviyaji tries to reason first with this group, then with the other. What, however, remains patently obvious is that it is impossible to go beyond the Jinnah-Rajendra Babu formula. I have gathered the impression that these people feel frightened. For instance, the Hindu M.L.A.s from Bengal do like the thing but have not the courage to put their signatures to it. If the editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* likes it, the editor of *Anand Bazar Patrika* is sure to dislike it. Then there are a few aggressive-minded youths to reckon with. These enjoy the reputation of being revolutionists. In their presence everybody behaves like a Cheshire cat. Endeavours are, of course, being made. Bidhan is even afraid to come. Nalini is due, but, being a East Bengal man, he fights shy of the mere mention of joint electorate. Mangal Singh and Tara Singh have extended their qualified approval, but they, too, are afraid. Gyani Sher Singh will not touch the formula with a pair of tongs. Gokul Chand Narang and some others like it but are fearful of the Sikhs. If an agreement depends on a collection of signatures, it will remain an impossibility till the Day of Judgment, the climate being what it is. We should certainly keep trying, but I have told Rajendra Babu quite plainly that the desirable objective to strive for is some sort of understanding between the Congress and the League. With this achieved, the plan should be placed before the public at large. The Government will, of course, feel disinclined to act upon it, but what I feel is that those favouring the formulae, will in course of time, gather enough strength. This appears to me to be the only way out of the impasse, and both Vallabhbhai and Rajendra Babu approve of the idea. It is now up to Rajendra Babu to fashion his action accordingly.

The maps for the Harijan Ashram buildings are now in the hands of the Committee. As soon as these receive the necessary sanction, the construction will be taken in hand.

My sheep and ram have reached Australia.

I am due to leave for Pilani in a week's time.

The Finance Member has conveyed his desire through the Governor of the Reserve Bank to meet me. I am going to see him in a couple of days. But I suppose the talks would remain confined to the economic issues mostly.

Sir Nripan Sarkar has been rendering valuable service in tackling the communal problem.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA (C.P.)

20

February 27, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I note what you say and will keep it in mind. But I do not quite understand one sentence of your letter.

Kindly explain it again.

I have established personal connection and so can approach anyone whenever I like without any difficulty. But I am doing everything in its natural course and unless I have got something new to say, I do not like to bore them with the same views again and again. I think that even in natural course, I will get many opportunities to press the point. But could Bapu visualise the next step? I would agree with you if you said that the only step first or next should be to remove the misunderstanding. I know they are ill-informed but I have also found that it suits them to maintain this blissful ignorance.

I understand that the Home Member has written to Bombay about Khan Sahib. It may bring about some result.

Panditji (Malaviyaji) has left today. As usual, he neither agrees with the rank communalists nor with Jinnah-Rajendra-prasad formula. He has given me a number of suggestions but



it is no use discussing them since I know that Jinnah is not prepared to go beyond the formula. I think eventually we will have to resort to Congress-League agreement. It is more than probable now that Panditji would go to England. In fact, before leaving for Bombay, he informed me definitely that he is leaving on the 15th March.

I had to pass embarrassing time these days. Panditji everyday pressed the point about the policy of *The Hindustan Times* and went to the extent of saying that I should leave the paper entirely in his hands. He even suggested that if I disliked his policy, I could resign. I could not accept his suggestions because it was not a question of merely my resignation. Parasnath and Devdas both would have followed me and crisis thus was inevitable. Financially, the paper would have been ruined. So, I definitely said No, and suggested that the matter be put before the Directors and the share-holders. This distressed Panditji very much for some time but then eventually he agreed to have a non-committal policy. So, *The Hindustan Times* will now make no comment either against or in favour of Panditji. I thought this was the best under the circumstances. I did not like that I should shock him by putting him out of the Board.

*Yours cordially,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
CARE MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA

## 21

February 28, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The breakdown of communal negotiations seems to be imminent. Although Punjab Hindus were not unfavourable towards the proposal, the difficulty is coming chiefly from Sikhs and

the Bengal Hindu. Among the Bengal Hindus those who come from West Bengal are favourably disposed towards Joint Electorate. On the other hand, Eastern Bengal is simply frightened of it and the worst part of the whole thing is that there is no one who can talk with responsibility. The whole lot of them is suffering from a kind of fear and even those who like the proposal cannot say openly. Sir Nripen Sarkar helped but when I asked him to get the post to support the proposal, he replied that the post was so frightened of getting involved into politics that he did not like to come to Delhi. Panditji as usual was neither here nor there.

We had a small conference this morning of Rajendra Babu, Bhulabhai, Vallabhbhai and myself and we thought that it would not be desirable to proceed any further. Any prolongation of the negotiations in our opinion would simply create further complications. We all agreed that if we could get a Congress-League settlement, we should get it. But Jinnah was not quite prepared for it and we also realised that minus Bengal (and even Congress Bengalese are not prepared to support us), the pact would be meaningless. It is a great tragedy and we can draw a moral out of it. First, there is not even one Bengalee to support us. We never backed anyone in Bengal and so not one advocate of our point is to be found. Another lesson that we can draw is this: "How is it that Moonje, Jagat Narayanlal can be better Hindus than Vallabhbhai, Rajendra Babu and others? Have not we ourselves given them undue importance and so by unanimous votes, they are the real leaders so far as communal matters go?" I fear that in any constructive work that you may do in future, these false prophets would put obstructions in your way. But this is only by the way. The communal question remains unsolved and by our failure we stand before the world thoroughly humiliated.

I understand that the Government is getting more and more disgusted of the Muslim demands. At every step they have to pay price for Mohammedan votes by giving them more services or placating the individuals. Naturally, therefore, they would like to come to some agreement with the better type of Indians, whether Hindus or Muslims.

You might have noticed that the Government of India have set aside one crore of rupees for village uplift. Thanks to Bapu

that they have been moved but I fear the money may not be spent. They are not even in touch with the realities and instead of thinking of providing food and cloth to the masses, they may think of providing radios. The money will be spent through the ministers in the provinces. I wonder whether Village Industries Association should not take initiative and offer to help the Government. If my memory is not playing trick, I think Vallabh-bhai had virtually captured the Government fund when he organised the Gujarat Flood and Relief Fund. I think Bapu, if he once makes up his mind, can virtually get possession of this one crore by tackling the Provincial Governments and the ministers properly. This is just for his information.

*Yours cordially,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
C/O MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA (C. P.)

22

March 4, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Enclosed is the copy of a letter which I have received just by the mail. I have been in correspondence with this gentleman who is a very influential man himself and is in touch with the Lancashire group. Mr. Kirkpatrick referred to in the letter is an M. P. and is one of the Lancashire members. He recently wrote in the *Manchester Guardian* that a deputation from the Federation of Indian Chambers should be invited to discuss Indo-Lancashire business. I have made very clear to these gentlemen in my personal letters that economic pact is impossible but that a political pact may be possible but that the latter could only be concluded between politicians and Lancashire interests. Now the question is what is the reply that is to be sent. A formal



invitation is difficult from their as well as our point of view. Talks could only be informal and without causing undue publicity. It may therefore be desirable that they should invite someone informally. But whom would they invite? It is impossible to get a homogeneous deputation from India to go to England. In any case, I have to reply and I seek Bapu's advice.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

Encl, 1 copy

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
C/O MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA (C. P.)

23

WARDHA,  
March 7, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have taken a vow of silence for a short duration. Which is why I am replying to your letter myself.

What I would like you to do is to write to him. You yourself would be sailing for England in a few months' time. That would be the opportune time for you to have a dialogue with Barloi. In course of your talk with him you should make it a point to underline the fact that a workable agreement could be effected only in co-operation with the top-ranking political leaders. Any agreement that would skirt round the political issues would prove a wasted effort, the situation being what it is at present.

With this made clear, there will be no room left for any sort of misunderstanding.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

24

WARDHA,  
March 7, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

Just glance over the enclosure. Do you find anything indicative of substance in this brother?

What Mahadev had meant to convey in his letter was that now that you have laboured so hard on this task, you should give finishing touches to it during your sojourn in England when you think the time is opportune for the purpose. Only a settlement worth having can be termed a success. There is little prospect of that at the present moment. So long as there is no resolution of the Hindu-Muslim problem, the other issues will remain unresolved, too. But it is only given to us to try as best we can. How about the Ranchi Ashram?

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

25

March 24, 1935

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

If Malkani and Viyogi Hari feel dissatisfied with the quality of the Harijan work, let Thakkar Bapa return and let the three of them put their heads together in order to prepare a report suggesting practicable changes. Suitable adjustments can then be made after studying their report. So long as the scholarships actually reach the boys and girls I shall feel quite satisfied that the money is being spent on a worthy object. We may not like the type of education imparted to the boys, but this is what they are getting, while we have so far failed to come forward with a better substitute for the benefit of the public and especially the Harijans. We shall have to make do with the scholarships so long as we ourselves do not evolve a lively alternative plan. There is sufficient scope for reforma-

tion in our schools. We are short of a cadre of trained teachers, and, this being so, the Delhi experiment and the Sabarmati experiment, both, are endearing to me.

A telegram about Rajendra Babu has arrived. All of us feel relieved. Jamnalalji is now leaving for Chhapra.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

26

WARDHA,  
April 10, 1935

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Yes, Thakkar Bapa had written to me. It was like that. Herewith Pole's (Sir Felix Pole) letter. It was he who restrained me. Rajaji also is opposed to an open agitation. I wait a fresh letter from the Pole.

The high seas are particularly tempestuous in the first week of June. Could you manage to sail a little earlier?

Schuster's letter is quite nice. He does want to achieve a great deal but, poor man, feels helpless. The policy they are pursuing just now has not grain of fellow-feeling about it. They are so inconsiderate about other people's angle of vision. They rely on the effectiveness of physical strength.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

27

WARDHA,  
April 27, 1935

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have already made a mention of one Sharma from Khurja. He has some knowledge of naturopathy. I have known him for



quite a few years. He would like to visit Battle Creek in order to gain some experience of this mode of treatment. Thereafter his plan is to proceed to Europe to see for himself how the nature cure clinics are functioning there. His programme will require his sojourn abroad for two and a half years. He is selfless as well as efficient. But he is blessed with a queer temperament. He had his own hospital, but he set fire to it. The books he had got printed followed suit because they were lacking in the knowledge that could be acquired only through first-hand experience. I feel like financing his trip and stay abroad from the money you have promised me for this year, of course after deducting therefrom the amount needed for the expenses here. In case you fall in with my wish in this regard, will you please ascertain how much would be needed for his visit to Battle Creek? Also, please find out which sea-route would be more convenient and less expensive. He will, of course, prefer a 3rd-class cabin or accommodation on the deck. How much will it cost to keep him there in comparative poverty? And do they at Battle Creek take students? Would it be in order if he sailed *via* Japan?

How have you been faring physically at present?

You might have noticed that I have accepted the added burden of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

28

WARDHA,  
April 27, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

*Modern Review* writes a note "Manu Redivivus" on the Bengal Govt.'s obstinate refusal to consider the protests of several castes in Bengal against their inclusion in what are known as 'Scheduled Classes'. Why should untouchability be thus forced on those who will not be untouchables, passes my

comprehension. Bapu says that whilst you are having the Executive Board meeting, it would be well for you to see His Excellency the Governor, as President of the Sangha, and drew his attention to this anomaly.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

## 29

### **Interview with the Governor of Bengal**

(1st May, 1935, at 10 a.m. Talked for 1 hour 20 mnts.)

I told him that I decided to go and had come to seek his advice and guidance. He said, "Yes, Until the Bill was out of the House, it would have been useless to go. Now it is quite different." Pointing out the impervious attitude of the Government, I cited how Assembly votes are treated. He said, "The Government of India may say that the Congress came in with an avowed object of obstruction and therefore the Government was not bound to accept votes." I replied, "On many occasions, even the Independents and the Europeans voted with the Congress." He agreed but did not want to make comments. He said there was a feeling in England that the Indians did not yet realise the great powers they were going to wield. He said how even now in Bengal, ministers were wielding great powers and having their own policy, under the new Constitution, it would be complete responsibility. I said, "That is all good but this is not the feeling in the Congress Circle. They consider reforms to be a sham but I admit that it could be made better by mutual understanding. In the absence of all understanding, the left-wingers in the Congress will have all the powers to themselves." He knew how B. Desai was attacked. Thought Socialism was a great menace. It is only a move towards chaos. The question is, "Would Congress throw an open challenge to Socialism?" I said, "It may if it were strengthened. But they



can't fight on two fronts. If no settlement, then Right Wing may retire and leave fields to the Left Wing." He said that this would be a great calamity. I said, "It is entirely in the hands of the Government. If they wanted to strengthen the hands of the Right Wings of the Congress, they should act and make a rapprochement. Just now, Gandhiji is powerful and he will continue to be so up to the end of his life. But what after that? The drift would mean discontent and strengthening the hands of fire-brands." He asked what was in my mind about the basis for a proper understanding. I said, "There is no likelihood of any substantial change in the Bill. This I recognise. But any Bill could be made an ideal one. Wedgewood Benn once used the phrase 'Dominion Status in Action'. This is more important. Had the Government told Gandhiji of their difficulties at the 2nd R.T.C., he would have asked them not to worry about the Parliamentary Act. Even now Gandhiji may take the same attitude. Matter was more important than the Form. If the new Reforms be allowed to work to give 'Dominion Status in Action' and leading India towards her goal, that would be a great thing. For instance, though military a non-votable item, yet may informally be put under Indian influence. As far as possible, within the four walls of the Bill, a great advance may be for the uplift of the masses and organisation of national forces for an evolution towards the Dominion Status within a reasonable time." He did not see why this could not be made a common ground. I said, "For this, personal contact is very essential." I pointed out that when I talked to Sir Henry Craik, he asked me whether I wanted personal contact before or after the Bill was passed. I answered "Immediately", but now it is more urgent. He said, "There were difficulties so long as the Bill was before the Commons but now there should be none. Whatever may have been the past history of the Congress, there is no gain saying the fact that is the largest well-organised political party. It was therefore the clear duty of the Cabinet to come to some agreement by negotiating with the Congress if it was possible for reaffirmation of the goal and laying down principle about the workability of the Reform. After all, what would the Government lose if the effort failed?" I said, "I am glad to hear this but what about the procedure to be adopted? Grigg had remarked that there were likelihood of your becoming the



Viceroy. In that case, I can entertain the future with some hope. Haily was another man capable of dealing with Gandhiji, who is not now in India but the Viceroy, I fear is useless for the purpose. You as a Governor can't act with authority. Hoare can do a lot but then Gandhiji has to be invited to go to England." He agreed that the Viceroy was overworked and was very sensitive. The Congress M.L.A.s not signing their names cut him to the quick. The Governor was very much devoted to the Viceroy. I said that I did my best to remove misunderstanding and even asked him whether M.L.A.s signing the names would help the situation. He expected Gandhiji to come to Riza Ali's party. How was Gandhiji to come there? He did not want to embarrass the Viceroy. The Governor said, "But how was Gandhiji to help if he was out of politics as he had declared?" I said he had never said this. He is only out of Congress. He was interested to hear all this and agreed that it was useless for Gandhiji to meet the Viceroy but he said, "Some missions are coming this Winter and besides there is no likelihood of the Act coming into operation before the beginning of 1937. Within this time there will be plenty of personal touch. There will be new Viceroy and that would solve the matter." I said, "How am I then to proceed?" He said that I should see Hoare and Sir Austin Chamberlain who is very powerful among the Conservatives although not associated with the Government. He said, "You are going on a very important mission. It is quite possible that you may meet with disappointment but should not be disheartened. It is not going to do good to Great Britain alone but to India and whole of the World." I said I won't be disappointed so long as there was sympathy. He said, "I would be prepared to make any gesture to get the Congress accept the responsibility but if they come to wreck it, the Constitution of course, would be suspended. But I have no desire to make any condition about the repressive laws. I am in a way fighting India's battle for freedom. People either know the position. In that case, it is not fair that they could ask for repealing the repressive laws. If they don't know, then, as ignorant people, they should not make any suggestion. It is unpleasant to keep 2500 men detained without trial. I have a plan for them. I am prepared to put my files before the responsible leaders. I am prepared to convince them why these laws are necessary but I

cannot accept any unreasonable suggestion and throw the Province again at the mercy of Terrorism.” I said, “If we agree that Terrorism is a menace and it has to be killed, you would not insist that yours is the only method. We may say, ‘Let us help you and you would certainly like yourself to be helped.’ ” He agreed but wanted us to be more practical. I said, “I do not find any disagreement on the principle. Are you not hopeful that in course of time, these laws would not be necessary?” He said with great emphasis, “Of course.” I said, “I am sure we could find some common ground.”

Then I asked for letters of introduction. He had promised to write to Hoare privately saying he, viz., Hoare can trust me. To Churchill he would write but did not understand what purpose would be served. I said, “I would try to tackle him and see whether he could not help us. Lloyd George I would see with a letter from Gandhiji.” The Governor said, “Lloyd George has all along been in favour of agreement by negotiations.” I said, “My latest information is that he thinks that some big man should go to India and settle up the things—a man like Smuts.” He felt interested. I have told him secrecy was very essential and the Government should not take any step without finding out how that step will be received by the other side. He agreed. He said, “The Viceroy himself thought that some personal contact was necessary but did not know whether time was ripe but now things are different.” I suggested, “What if Hoare came to India as head of one of the missions?” He said, “I don’t know.” I also suggested that the Governor himself may lead one of the missions, vacating the Bengal Gadi temporarily.

30

CALCUTTA,  
May 3, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I got your letter the day I was leaving for Darjeeling and have returned from there only this morning. Naturally there-

fore I could not see the article referred to by you. All the same I did speak to the Governor and when he asked me whether I had seen the article, I had to confess "No." He said that there was objection against only one caste, I forgot the name, and he said that that caste since has been removed from the schedule. I will look into the article mentioned in your letter and if still there is anything to be written, I will write. I had a successful interview with him about my proposed trip.

Bapu has written to me about Dr. Sharma and I will write tomorrow after making some enquiries. I think it is possible to send him as far as New York or San Francisco on a cargo steamer without having to pay any freight. The cargo steamer takes a little longer but is quite comfortable. Being large shippers of Gunnies to America, I hope to be able to persuade the Liner to take the passenger free but I will write after making further enquiries.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M. DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

### 31

CALCUTTA,  
May 4, 1935

PUJYA BAPU,

I got your letter the day I was leaving for Darjeeling. I wanted to see the Governor before fixing up finally my passage to Europe and after having a talk with him have fixed up a berth by "Cont Rosso" sailing on the 23rd of May. I wish to leave this place on the 11th and after staying for a few days with my parent at Benares, I hope to reach Wardha about the 17th. I hope you will keep your time for me as I will be staying at Wardha only for two days. Before I leave, I wish to have a



lengthy talk with you. I deliberately did not write to you these days as I was intending to go to Wardha and so put off everything for personal discussion.

We had a successful meeting of the Executive Committee of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and in that connection also, I will take a little of your time.

Now about Dr. Sharma. As regards his expenses, I am at your disposal. As regards other points, first of all what would be the total expenditure? This I cannot reply. I enquired of the Steamship Company that take our goods to New York. The name of the Liner is "Roosevelt Steamship Company". They are prepared to take Mr. Sharma to New York free of charge. Mahadevbhai will have to write to Brajmohan to fix up the Steamer. It will be done on hearing when he is likely to go. From New York to Battlecreek is about 15 hours' journey and I do not think it will be costly. But so far as I know, they have no arrangement for teaching. It is purely a Sanatorium and the patients are taught to look after themselves. Lessons on cooking are given and every night there is some lecture about health. They have got special provisions for the poor and so far as I remember, he should get a room at the most for 2 dollars a day, inclusive of food and medical attendance, provided they are convinced that he is a deserving man. I used to pay 10 dollars a day for a big room. For special nursing or special examination, one has to pay extra. Dr. Sharma therefore will be able to learn only from what he will see and hear there. I think he will be able to learn a lot if he is a clever man and if you will give him a letter of introduction, this would help much. Before he sails, you may write to Dr. Kellog personally and your very name will be a great help to Dr. Sharma. I don't know Kellog personally. He was not there when I was in Battlecreek. He has another Sanatorium to which he gives a part of his time. The Sanatorium is a huge building composed of about 1,000 rooms and there are about 40 doctors. I did not have personal acquaintance with anyone there except the subordinate doctor, even whose name I have forgotten, who presented me with a Bible and also used to come often to me to discuss Christianity. My letter of introduction can have little value. I had at that time with me a letter of introduction given by you for Lord Lothian and when some people came to know that I

possessed a letter written in your own hand-writing there was great demand for seeing it. I am sure therefore that the best recommendation for Dr. Sharma is a letter from you and if you send it before Dr. Sharma leaves, it will be still better. Maybe that Dr. Sharma may be able to exchange for his lodging and boarding his services as a massagist or as a water treatment man. In that case, he would not have to spend much.

One can go to Battle Creek even by Pacific but I do not see any reason why that route should be selected. If he goes by Pacific, he will have to get down at Frisco, and from Frisco to Battle Creek will take about 48 hours by train.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

PUJYA SHRI MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA

## 32

WARDHA,  
May 6, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am in receipt of your letter. If you reach here by the 27th or the 28th, that would suit me, still better if you can manage to do so by the 26th. There is going to be a meeting of the Standing Committee of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan on the 28th, but I will find time for you. I also am due to leave for Bombay on the 22nd in order to see Kamla Nehru who is sailing in the same steamer as yourself.

Does the Roosevelt Shipping Company freight ship reach the New York harbour direct?

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

I would like to have Mira Ben's book on bee keeping back.



*Copy*

**Despatch to Gandhiji from London**

June 14, 1935

Met Findlater Stewart<sup>1</sup> for an hour and a half. Gave him introductory letters—one from Gandhiji and the other from Governor of Bengal. I said we had never met before but he said we had. I told how Gandhiji and Anderson held high opinions of him, to which he replied that he had sweet memories of them both. He read the letter from Gandhiji that I had given. I said I hoped he knew the object of my visit. He said, "Yes." I asked: "Should I relate the whole story?" I began with my training in business, association with Englishmen—A dozen of them in employment in India—and how I knew the good and weak points, but it was Gandhiji who taught me to entertain friendship. How I realised India's progress was bound with proper understanding between the two races. I worked for a settlement in 1929 before Gandhiji saw Irwin followed by a breakdown. Then came Lahore Congress and C.D. Movement. How I sympathised with the movement but did not finance because I did not want to take the consequences. Could have done so privately, but honestly, demanded open dealings and so had to be content with mere sympathy. Got involved once in 1930 in the famous Merchant's procession. Then came Sir B.L. Milter sent by Irwin to see me. Went to Allahabad. Played some part in pact. Came to Second R.T.C. Did not make acquaintance with anyone here because of rush of the things and big men meeting big men. Gandhiji back to India. In gaol. How accidentally I got acquainted with Hoare. This probably led to my acquaintance with Anderson. I did not seek the acquaintance—it was providential. How he helped me to get into touch with Gandhiji in jail, but Willingdon refused help. Went on like that. Last December report out. I again said to Anderson that a tragedy was going to be enacted. I did not go by contents of reform but by its spirit. Delhi Pact with Irwin gained nothing

<sup>1</sup> He was the chief of the Secretariat of the India Office and a highly capable officer,



but was accepted because of spirit. That psychology should be developed. He, viz., Anderson put me on to Willingdon. Had two interviews and then arranged another interview with Craik and Sardar, but no result. Then related to my disappointment to Anderson. He encouraged me to come here. I consulted Gandhiji and he also agreed. Anderson wrote to Secretary of State. Gandhiji gave me letter on you and Lloyd George. I have been here a week and written to Hoare, Zetland and Irwin, but none replied. Went to Foreign Office—from pillar to post and post to pillar. Now at sea. Findlater Stewart took a long breath, felt distress at my plight and hoped that he did not keep me waiting. I said no, and he said it gave him happiness. He promised all help and guidance. He asked what did I suggest. I said a better understanding. Dominion Status in action. Where responsibility not directly given—should be done so by convention. There should be a pact of friendship. He asked had I read the Instrument of Instructions. I said I had but that was all wooden—no human touch. I said there were two alternatives : either “smooth work” of reforms or wrecking tactics. I knew Congressmen’s minds. Every seat would be captured and also the Government, and then would come deliberate clash with the Governor thus compelling him to assume all power. The Constitution would be wrecked, but that is not my only fear—defeat of Gandhism will create forces of Communism. Sampurnanand’s circular. Main plank to discredit old leaders. If no pact of understanding then Communism must be given ground. This is one point. Another, Muslims getting demoralised by spoon-feeding and misled into the belief that their worst actions would be condoned. F. said did they condone at Karachi. I said yes because Muslims were encouraged, then was firing. He said—were not the murderers in Calcutta hanged? I said yes and many more. But that is not the point. I am telling of the belief of Mohammedans. I did not want to go into controversy but there is a vast difference between the policies in Kashmir and Hyderabad. The point is that there is an impression in India that Muslim action would be condoned. The result is that a Hindu official trying to be impartial always helps Mohammedans. He saw the point. I said such a belief will spoil the Mohammedans. Grigg complains some day you will have to take action and that day will finish your friendship with Mohammedans. The third point is the wrong

education to the officials. They think that anything, even good, if done by popular element must be opposed. Untouchability, village work—all anathema to the officials. Similarly, the man in street taught to suspect Government motives. The result is a wider and wider gulf. Where will all this lead to? Wrecking of the Constitution is not the fearful point—everybody in India believes this a setback. I may pick up some good point because I am partial, but others genuinely believe it bad. Not acting as bargainers as suggested by Sir Samuel Hoare. It is not the wrecking of the constitution which I fear, but something worse—which I said just now—and so we want peace. He asked with whom to conclude peace and on what conditions. I said, Mohammedans we should rule out because they do not oppose the constitution, they do not fight for advance. Communists we should rule out because they do not want any agreement, and Liberals we should rule out because they are half a dozen leaders of different views without any following. The only organization left is the Congress. He said, but could Mr. Gandhi deliver the goods? I said yes he could and he is getting old and after he dies there would be no one to negotiate and that would be another calamity. He said he sympathised with the object but did not see how to achieve it, with whom to make a pact and then whom to hold responsible. In democracy difficult to deal with individuals. I said even in England the country was ruled by a dozen men—so in India. Democracy is always in name—it is individuals. He agreed but preferred friendly statements from both sides rather than a pact. Something, he said, dramatic like the King's Declaration. I said this would all be wooden just as the other fine speeches and sentiments expressed in the House of Commons have been wooden. There must first of all be personal touch. He said you are assuming that the present position will continue. There will be personal touch. I said I did not care how the substance is got, whether by pact or by statement, but essentially it must be an understanding of trust, and friendship. He said a pact may be broken again. I said it may be, but if there was an understanding, then both sides could continue to make honest efforts. The difference between present and future could be—at present a partnership is in name without the partners meeting, in future, in any trouble, partners could meet and talk. Today the doors are slammed against the



partners. He again repeated that he agreed with the main principle but saw difficulties. Friendship cannot flow out of legal documents, it has to be created by statements from both sides. I agreed, but pointed out that statements would come only as a symbol of friendship after personal meeting. He would think of a plan during the week-end and see whether he would make some suggestions. He will arrange meeting with others.

I think he was deeply impressed and hope that he will give all help. He made enquiries about Gandhiji's health and said how he remembered the three happy hours on Sunday when he talked. I said that this was a very good argument in my favour—there is no political agreement between you two and yet you cherish a happy memory of your meeting. This is of the personal touch—men are men—the personal touch is lacking just now. It is through this that we ought to establish friendship. He will write to me again. I told him to keep secrecy and not to take any step without finding out how it will be received.

### 34

#### **Talk with Mr. Butler** (Talk lasted an hour)

June 20, 1935

After preliminaries I summed up the position.

I said I had met Englishmen in London, politicians and businessmen and all of them sincerely believe that a great step forward has been taken. I do not doubt their sincerity. On the other hand I want you to realise that in India there is a genuine feeling that this reform is a retrograde step. It may look ridiculous how there could be much views in contrast, but this can be explained by the prevailing atmosphere in India. Congress Party is in the Assembly—not one advice of theirs accepted by the Government. Not one Indian leader allowed to go to Quetta. Naturally one feels what is this partnership when there is no



personal contact, when we are treated with suspicion even if we want to go to see our own people in distress. He explained that the objection was from military, but all the same likely to be misunderstood. He said he got my mind quite well. What I wanted was a proper atmosphere and proper understanding. How to do it. I said first personal contact. He said, "What is your suggestion?" I said that Delhi is hopeless. There is no brain in the Government of India. Personal contact in Delhi would be useless. Not one man in India today, except Henderson, who could handle Gandhi. He said "Could he?" I said "Yes." He asked what I thought of Lord Brabourne, and I said I did not know him. "And Erskine" he asked. I said that I knew him. He said both are good men.

I said another alternative would be that the next Viceroy should go with some commission, with authority to talk immediately. The third alternative would be that either the Secretary of State or the Under Secretary of State should go to India to talk. The fourth alternative could be that Mr. Gandhi should be invited here for some other ostensible reason but really to talk. He said he entirely agreed with me that the atmosphere was bad and that is required to be improved. The whole question was of psychology but how could it be done. He said, "We feel disheartened when we think that this Bill for which we sacrificed our health, our friends and our time, is supposed to be a retrograde step. Sir Samuel Hoare lost his health and I stood up because I was a young man but all the same had to undergo a great strain and this is the reward." I said this has to be considered along with the atmosphere prevailing in India and then you will understand why people are so indifferent about the fate of the Bill. He asked if people were sorry to lose Sir Samuel Hoare and I said, "Not in the least". He said, "But does not Mr. Gandhi feel sorry?" I said, "I suppose he must be feeling sorry because he knows Sir Samuel Hoare personally. He also knows Sir Findlater Stewart and personal contact is a great thing." He asked what was the feeling about Lord Halifax. I said they thought that he had resigned himself to the inevitable and that he was a discredited man. All the same, I said, he is respected in India, but disrespected by Englishmen in India. He said that Lord Halifax is still a very powerful man and this impression in India is wrong. I said I was glad to hear

this. He said Lord Halifax has made India [the mission of his life.

He said he would consider all I had said and would try to help me. He would like me to meet his wife and come to lunch with him and a few other friends and would do all he could towards helping me. He asked me how long I would stay here and I said as long as I was wanted, but would not like to feel that I was idling away my time. He said he would see to that. He would want me to meet Mr. Baldwin. Lord Zetland would meet me as soon as possible. They did not like the idea of a treaty. I said I did not care about the word, I would not use the word treaty or pact, all the same there must be understanding and the first thing they should get ought to be personal touch. He said didn't I think that by April the whole Government of India would practically be changed, there would be a new Viceroy and then it would be possible to establish personal touch. I said I thought it would be too late. He said the present Government of India thought what would be the use of talking to Gandhi—what good would it do. I said let them be asked what good it has done by not talking to Gandhi. He said, yes, that is the right answer. He said why do people in India disbelieve in our honesty. I said because of the atmosphere. He said—who created the atmosphere. I said—Englishmen, British merchants in India. He said—but don't you see they are ill-educated and ill-mannered people, they are not the right specimen of our race. I said—but Indian generally do not know this, they have not seen your right specimens, the only specimens which they have seen are the Englishmen in India. He said they did very stupid things with which he did not agree.

He asked whether Communism was getting into power. I said yes because Gandhism was being killed by the Government and Communists. People feel that only through coercion could we get self-Government. He said, "Do you know of any country in the world that has given up her territory voluntarily as is being proposed to be done by Great Britain under this Bill." I said people feel no cause to be grateful. He felt it was a great tragedy. He asked whether I was feeling pessimistic about the future. I said yes I do look at the atmosphere in India. He said he was at one with me but did not know how to translate the feeling into action. I said, "I have given you half a dozen



alternatives, now you should produce more, but you do not mean to say that Englishmen have gone bankrupt of statesmanship and that they have no formula for translating their feelings.”

He will write to me again and has promised all the help that I want. I told him how I have been waiting for 3 years at a time Henderson wanted to meet Gandhiji but was dropped at the last moment. He quietly listened. It appears it is all the man on the spot creating difficulties.

## 35

### Met Sir George Schuster

June 20, 1935

Talked for an hour. He is busy just now in preparing ground for the next Empire Economic Conference. He believes that Ottawa was a great mistake. He had to defend it in India because we did not give away much. The only satisfaction about Ottawa was that we did not part as enemies. He said, facts must be recognised, every country has its own problem and on this basis we may have some combination. Discussing about the present position, he said that it had to be recognised that today 20% of the population in England was starving and 2 million were actually out of employment. This meant undernourishment of the whole nation and eventually deterioration of the health and constitution of the whole race. He is not in favour of restriction of production. The price of primary products must be raised if prosperity has to be brought in, not by restriction but by imposing new taxes on the rich and maintaining two millions on charity, giving free meals to the school children and free milk supply. I said this was all very well but I was more concerned about India. He complained that people had no time to talk even of England and nobody talked of India.



He talked to Neville Chamberlain, but he did not know to whom I should talk. He said I must see Linlithgow and he would drop a line to the latter. I should also see Zetland and Hoare. Simon he said was useless and not straight, but I must get to Baldwin if I only had fifteen minutes. I said how should I be able to present my case in fifteen minutes. He said, if you cannot, you never can. London is a busy place; fifteen minutes should be quite enough. I said, without political truce no constructive work is possible in India. This he recognised and will help as much as he can, but it was not such an easy task. People had no time to think. About Blackett he said he was very much discredited, but he liked Layton and Henry Strakosch.

I told him what I was doing in my village. He was very interested; he preferred fresh milk to dry powder. He asked me to talk to Linlithgow about it. He asked me to come whenever I want any help and he will do his best. He said in India he was never helped by anyone except Noyce. Bore was always against him. Now they take pride that there is no imagination.

## 36

### Lunch with Sir Basil Blackett

June 24, 1935

He thinks things are bucking up but unless special action is taken present prosperity may not be maintained. He says rise in prices to the further extent of 20% is essential. He advocates public expenditure. This may mean depreciation of sterling and rise in the price of gold. He says France is fantastic in clinging to gold. He had anticipated that she would have to give up gold and still feels that one day she will have to. Silver he thinks will go high. It is a political scandal in America, all the same it is there and America is capable of buying all the available silver. He put me a pertinent question—"What would

Indian do about her rupee in case silver rises above 100 rupees?" I said I thought we would put embargo on export. He said this would encourage smuggling and consequently cause a continuous strain on the silver rupee. He suggested that by notification the convertibility of notes in silver rupee should be stopped. New coins with half the silver contents of the present rupee should be coined. Those who held the existing rupees should be allowed to hold and melt and sell to America and thus reap profit. I am inclined to agree with him because if we do not do this then there is a likelihood of exchange going above 1/6. In any case his suggestion and question was pertinent. I said in the near future there was no likelihood of silver going so high. He said that no one could say.

### 37

June 24, 1935

Attended Village Welfare Association at Mrs. Schuster's place. Sir Malcolm Hailey and Mr. Darling both emphasized two points. First, the politicians were eager to help village uplift scheme. Till now money had been wasted by the Government, in future success could be achieved only through co-operation of non-official and agency and by proper approach to the villagers with a view to their temperament, resources and method of working. Secondly, both were of the view that a villager was very astute and quite ready to pick up new methods provided beneficial. He knew his interest well.

In the afternoon had Sir Henry Page-Croft to tea. He agreed that now the Bill was passed, creating of better atmosphere was most essential. Sincerely believes that more power given to Indians and now that the controversy is over he hopes that they will be properly utilised.

**Lunch with the Following Persons in the House of Commons :**

S. S. Hammersely, Reginald Clarke, Anthony Crossby,  
Joseph Nall, Admiral Campbell and Hamilton Kerr.

June 25, 1935

Many of them presented Manchester. I gave them a plain talk. I pointed out the following dangers to Manchester:

- (1) Sentiment in favour of protection;
- (2) need for Revenue;
- (3) Japan's strong position as a consumer of cotton;
- (4) our capacity to reduce the cost of production. We talked and talked, but they find it difficult to swallow this unpleasant truth. I told them that Mody was not backed by Bombay mills.

The best course for them was to cultivate acquaintanceship with Indian politicians and get their goodwill. They could not grasp this although they know their difficulties. I told them that in Burma preference to Indian cloth was because of preference to Burma oil in India. Twenty-five per cent protection was set off by duties on stores and cotton. They did not like the plain truth, but we parted as friends. Mr. Crossby remarked that they were behind the times. Hammersley was rather irritated. He asked if I had any constructive suggestion. I said, "Yes I can take your cloth if you give me your goodwill. As an industrialist I don't care for it, but as a politician I do." But they are hopelessly dull men.



39

**Lunch with Sir Findlater Stewart**

(Talk lasted more than an hour)

June 26, 1935

I told him what I have been doing all along, seeing people and that I did not get one man who did not agree with me on principle. He said he himself was very keen to get Mr. Gandhi on his side but did not know how to do it. He was very charmed with Mr. Gandhi's originality and pointed out how the latter used the metaphor in criticising the composition of the R.T.C., that instead of building a house with rectangular bricks we were piling up boulders over boulders and trying to do something impossible. He is averse to a pact. The prejudices in India and in England must be recognised. People were against a pact. He liked the idea of some solemn declaration from this side and response from Mr. Gandhi. That declaration will be made in any case but he preferred that it should be made after personal contact. In this respect he asked me pertinently if I thought Mr. Gandhi would reply to the declaration to say something like this—"Well, I do not like the Bill, but I have talked and I think we must give it a fair trial." I said I felt they could get Mr. Gandhi to make this statement provided he was handled properly. If you open your heart and tell him honestly of your limitations he would help you. I told him how at the second R.T.C. he was ready to go back without a constitution, provided there was a pact of friendship. He wants change of heart, he does not go by the contents of the Bill but by spirit. I told him how he got bad impressions of Lord Sankey and Mr. MacDonald; how he was charmed by Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare. He said it was funny that he was charmed by Tories, all the same he appreciated and knew that Mr. Gandhi himself was a Conservative.

He remarked : "We do not like Mr. Gandhi to be on the other side of the fence. We should not like him to be permanently against us." But he said such great importance has been attached to an interview between Mr. Gandhi and the Viceroy that it has assumed the significance of a meeting between two

enemy leaders. I pointed out how Mr. Gandhi met Lord Reading in 1922 and then the second time Lord Irwin in 1929 and then 1931. I said these interviews were directed in the past towards pacts. Gandhi-Irwin pact was not a sudden step. But I told him how Mr. Gandhi also met Lord Chelmsford who asked his (G's) help. He had not always met the authorities with a view to a pact. After the pact he was running from pillar to post to improve the situation. He said, "We are a constitutionalist people. Mr. Gandhi although very revered by nine-tenths of the population had no constitutional position." I said surely you do not want to wait until he became a minister. He said no. He hoped that after the "understanding", Mr. Gandhi's meeting with the authorities would not cause any great sensation. If the leaders of the non-conformist group here wanted to meet the Prime Minister it would not cause any sensation, but somehow or other meeting Mr. Gandhi has been treated on a different plane. "All the same", he said, "I have grasped your mind and I am at one with you. I will try to find out a solution and it is now up to me to find a scheme." He asked what I thought of Lord Brabourne and Emerson. I said Gandhiji pulled very well with Emerson. Lord Brabourne I did not know. Mr. Gandhi could come here too, but that would rouse speculation. We discussed the Viceroy meeting Gandhi at some garden party and then some Governor talking "other things" to him.

He asked me how I got attached to Gandhi and I related my story and told him how I got involved in Defence of India Act. He agreed that chief thing, was to handle Mr. Gandhi properly and he realised that the Viceroy was not the proper man. Henderson, Emerson or Brabourne, these names appealed to him. I told him how it was suggested that I should meet Mr. Baldwin. He said he would arrange it. He will write to me again fixing up a time for another meeting. He will tell Lord Zetland about my mission.

I told him that the Congress would not accept office for the sake of running the Government machinery efficiently. If they come at all they will come to do so constructive work, such as expansion of education, increasing productivity and so on and so forth. Will the Governors help? He said it would be entirely the ministers' business to lay down their policy. Governors will never interfere. It would not be worth the trouble to pass this Bill



simply to strengthen the position. He sincerely assured me to believe that this was the sincere position.

## 40

### **Met Lord Lothian**

(Talk lasted forty-five minutes)

June 26, 1935

I repeated what I have been saying to others and asked if he also did not believe that a great step forward had been taken. He said, "Did not it? I agree with the diehards that it has been a surrender. You who are not used to any constitution cannot realise what great power you are going to wield. If you look at the constitution it looks as if all the powers are vested in the Governor-General and the Governor. But is not every power here vested in the King? Everything is done in the name of the King but does the King ever interfere? We are constitution-minded people. Once the power passes into the hands of the Legislator, the Governor or the Governor-General is never going to interfere. Of course he will interfere if there is danger to law and order or the tranquillity of the country, but surely it is not your intention to disturb the peace. The Civil Service will always be helpful. The Labours in the old days abused the Civil Service in England, but immediately they came into power they became Civil Services' best friends. You too will realise this. We are a disciplined people. They would give you their advice but once a policy is laid down they will carry it out loyally and faithfully." I interrupted and pointed out the difference between the Civil Service here and there, which was alien. I said: "You have to accelerate the pace of Indianization," and he agreed. He said, "The greatest danger you will now have to fight will be against control of Military, but you have got every other thing." But he agreed with me that the psychology in India had to be improved; it was very bad just now. He said "We could not help it. We had to fight the diehards here. You could not realize what



great courage has been shown by Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare. It was a great triumph on the part of Liberalism and we could not create psychology because we did not want to spare the diehards. They called the legislation a piece of surrender and so we had to talk here in a different language. Besides this the other difficulty was Lord Willingdon. He has great distrust in Mahatma and he is not a very brainy man. But in the middle of July the Bill will be on the statute book and there will be a change in the Viceroy next April, so we have to do something." I said—"I am impatient. I do not want to wait until next April. By that time the die will be cast." Indian opinion has been educated to distrust the incoming reform and by next April preparations will be made to fight the next election on the issue of the wrecking of the reforms. He agreed that something should be done immediately and asked if I had any constructive suggestion. I said first personal contact and then a pact. He said—"Who was the best Governor in India?" I said—"Sir John Anderson." He asked—"What about Lord Brabourne?" I said—"I do not know but decidedly Anderson was better." He agreed. I said—"Either Anderson should talk, or the Secretary of State should come to India, or Mr. Gandhi should be invited here." He said he entirely agreed that something should be done to change the psychology immediately and he hoped that Lord Zetland would be able to do something. He said he would talk to Lord Zetland, Lord Halifax and Mr. MacDonald. I should see Mr. MacDonald. I may see Issac Foot, but he could not help much. I should see Lloyd George after some time. He would write to Mr. MacDonald about me and then I should fix up an interview and he asked me to see him again.

He was very enthusiastic about the Reforms, talking very sincerely and felt that an immense advance was to take place in India under the new Bill. But he agreed that on account of psychology it was not all properly understood. He promised to help in every way he could. He would speak to Lord Halifax this afternoon. I told all about the Quetta affairs. He will see me again.

## 41

## Interview with Lord Zetland

(Commenced at 2.45 p.m. and lasted forty minutes)

June 27, 1935

I paid him complements and congratulated him on his new appointment. This pleased him very much.

I told him the object of my mission. He was extremely impressed, went on listening, rarely interrupted. Once interrupted by questioning whether Mr. Gandhi was a practical man. I said, Hoare, Halifax, Findlater Stewart and Smuts could give Mr. Gandhi a certificate on that point. He said, "but what about his book *Home Rule*?" I said, "I can only try to explain. He has set certain ideals which ought to be achieved, but until they are achieved, one may not be able to live up to them. I can cite his opening the hospitals built by Lajpat Rai and C.R. Das, although he criticized hospitals in his book." Lord Zetland added that Gandhi himself had an operation. I agreed. I cited his support to G. in second marriage, also how he got an agreement with Ahmedabad to reduce wages. I said, "You should not doubt his practicability. He is not after quantity but quality; he wants spirit." Lord Zetland said, "I very much appreciate your point. I hate misunderstanding, when I was in Calcutta I could not understand why there could be any misunderstanding." I said, "You have left no misunderstanding behind you. Lord Halifax too has not, although he put 60,000 men in gaol." Lord Zetland was very pleased. He said that English people had got misgivings about Congress. The repudiation of debts, etc.—all these talks have frightened them. They fear Congress will sweep the poles and disrupt the Government and finish the British rule. Not only had the opponents fear, but private letters from supporters who said that they were doing something disastrous. He said that he wished I could make the friends in India realize how they had to fight here against these heavy odds to get the Bill passed. I said I could get them to realize if the atmosphere was created. At present I cannot. The policy of 'see me not' had spoilt the atmosphere.

I cited Quetta affairs. He had the Gandhi-Willingdon correspondence before him. I read the relevant portion and told him



to see the difference between the two attitudes. He realised and said, "Now what can be done?" I said that Willingdon-Gandhi meeting would be of no use, but should come first as otherwise other Governors could not meet Gandhi. But after Gandhi-Willingdon meeting Gandhi should be handed over to some Indian Governor. He said that he realised the thing well and that I should keep in touch with Findlater Stewart. He would do his best to help and would talk to me again. I think he was very much impressed.

## 42

### **Lord Derby Came to See Me at My Hotel**

June 27, 1935

He is a very nice man, stood on no ceremony. When I wanted to see him, he at once agreed to come to see me at my hotel. He was very enthusiastic about the Bill and said he was personally full of goodwill and wanted to see goodwill from both sides in India. He promised to give all the help that he could. I said I would like to meet Lord Salisbury and he said he would speak to him and suggested that I should also meet Sir Austin Chamberlain. He said, "Ring me up whenever you want me. I will come to you or I may invite you to come to me, and also come to Manchester. I will invite you to lunch and put you in touch with all the big men."

He said that among the diehards Sir Henry Page Croft and Lord Salisbury were quite a different type, really honest men, not so Lord Lloyd and Mr. Churchill and a few others.



*Copy*

June 29, 1935

PUJYA BAPU,

Now that I have seen a good number of people, almost all of them, I am writing this lengthy letter. It is a very slow process to meet people in London as they are to be booked for weeks and weeks ahead. I am seeing Halifax on the 5th, that is, a month after my arrival, and Hoare is so busy with Germany, Italy and China that he has asked me to wait and remind him again and again about an interview. Yet I know that both of them are keeping in touch with my work. All those whom I have seen have shown great sympathy—I do not think mere lip sympathy—with my mission. The most helpful of them is Sir Findlater Stewart and I think he counts a lot. He is very friendly towards you, never tired of singing your praises, and when I gave him your letter he read it with great affection and emotion. He has promised and is giving every help. His influence could be very well estimated from the fact that he told me without making any boast that it was he who was responsible for getting you on the second R.T.C. Maffey (Sir George Maffey) tells me that he has influence, brain and determination and I am told he is pro-Indian except where the direct interest of Service comes into clash. I realise more than ever that men on the spot for the day-to-day administration and permanent officials here for moulding wider policies are the chief people to deal with. Ministers of course count but permanent officials no less. Lord Zetland after showing great sympathy with my object told me significantly to keep in touch with Findlater Stewart. So I am sticking to this man and all my important interviews are arranged through him. And after two interviews with him, lasting two and a half hours he has told me that he agrees with me on principle and that something precise has to be put on paper now and that how it is up to him to tell of the next step. Now a little more detail about my work.

I have met the following—Sir Findlater Stewart twice and talked for two and a half hours; Butler, Under Secretary of State, and very charming and intelligent man although very young; talked for one hour and I am lunching with him this week;

Zetland talked for forty-five minutes and I am meeting him again after the Bill is passed in the House of Lords; Lothian, talked for forty-five minutes and I am meeting him again after the Bill is passed; Lord Derby I am meeting again as many times as I like; Sir Henry Page Croft I met twice; lunched with the Manchester Group of the House of Commons; lunched with Sir Henry Strakosch and he has asked me to go and lunch with him whenever I need his help; lunched with Sir Thos. Catto and many other important city men, who have asked me to lunch again; Sir George Schuster twice; lunched with Sir Basil Blackett and am lunching again; lunched with Croft, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State; saw Mr. Bone of the *Manchester Guardian* and Mr. Crozier of the same paper will meet me at Manchester. And now during this week I am meeting Lord Linlithgow, Lord Halifax and Mr. MacDonald. Appointments are all fixed except for Sir Samuel Hoare. Findlater Stewart is going to arrange for an interview with Mr. Baldwin. Schuster said, "Don't waste any time over Simon." Lothian said, "Leave along Lloyd George for the time being." Derby said I must see Salisbury and Sir Austin Chamberlain. He said that among the diehards, Lord Salisbury and Sir Henry Page Croft are the most honest men. He does not care much for Churchill and Lord Lloyd. He has asked me to go to Manchester when he will invite me to lunch with influential Manchester friends. Lord Reading is ill. I am also seeing more city men. Most of the important members of the Labour Party are lunching with me this week at the House of Commons. Later on I will see Church people and other journalists, but I have realised now that for my job Halifax, Zetland, Hoare, Butler, Baldwin and Lothian, and last but not least Sir Findlater Stewart are more important than the others, so I will spend my time more or less on this group. Findlater Stewart has already promised to give me the next step so I am now entirely in his hands. Butler is a very clever man and is all at my service.

Now about my conversation. First I told them that it is not a political stunt but a genuine feeling among the Indians that far from being an advance the Bill was a retrograde step calculated to tighten the grip. At this the friends here raise their hands in astonishment and could not believe how Indians could think in such a manner. Secondly, I told them that I recognised



their sincerity when they believed that it was great advance. It would be so if there would be the spirit behind the reform, but there was no such spirit in India today when we deal with the man on the spot. "I have felt all along", I said, "that it is not the contents of the Bill but the spirit that would count. Without the spirit, the Bill is the most reactionary piece of legislation." I pointed out to them that after all on every point the last say rests with the Governor-General and the Governor and if the Governors and the Governor-General used their powers, then the regime will be autocracy of the first class. If, on the other hand, they would act up to the analogy of the constitutional monarch—an analogy advanced by every one of them—then the Bill could bring in a very good regime. So it all depends on the spirit in which it will be worked. I admitted that the friends in England were full of goodwill and sympathy, but all this did not cross the seas since the actions of those in charge of the Indian administration in India were in contrast with the feelings expressed here. I cited a very recent incident, viz., of Quetta. I have handed over to them the correspondence passed between you and Lord Willingdon. I tried to show the contrast between the two, viz., your request and their reply. How in such atmosphere one could believe that when today we were not allowed to see our own brethren in distress, after a period we could be allowed to wield wider powers? It is this oppressive atmosphere in India which makes us believe that the reforms is a retrograde step. In order to create a different psychology about the reforms so that it may be worked and the intention of the friends here may be fulfilled and the present strife ended once and for all, a better spirit should be cultivated in India without wasting much time. And I also told them how I tried to cultivate that spirit at Delhi and failed. Thirdly I told them how in the absence of a friendly spirit the Bill was likely to bring greater bitterness between the two nations. The present atmosphere, I said, was causing a growth of irresponsibility all round. Civil Service was getting irresponsible and indisciplined. I cited how in the case of Khan Sahib the Home Member could not do anything because the subordinate stood up against the former. Civilian in India just now thought as if their only function was to maintain law and order. And therefore whatever suggestion, even if good, came from popular side must be opposed. Irresponsibi-



lity among the Congressmen made them suspect every move of the Government. The right-wing would, as a consequence get weaker and the left-wing stronger. Even the right-winger in the absence of any proper understanding were likely to work for wrecking of the reforms. The present atmosphere was causing demoralization of the Mohammedans, who thought that the Government would condone their worst actions. "Gandhiji has kept his head above water in all these difficulties." I tell them, "But you are killing a man who is your friend in the world." I tell them that the present atmosphere is causing such a demoralization that it is almost impossible to do any constructive work in India. The necessity of increasing the purchasing power of the masses about which too much is being said by the English Economists could not be taken in hand so long as there is a gulf between the two.

The rulers spending all the time on the maintenance of law and order and the people spending theirs in fighting, the Government is a most deplorable phenomenon of today. I, therefore, tell them that this order must be revised. The first step should be towards the establishment of personal contact. The second step should be to send the best men as Governors and Governor-General so as to avoid any friction between the Ministers and the Governors. I tell them that it must be borne in mind that Congress has no attraction in merely controlling the Government and running its machinery efficiently. If they come in and run the Government they can do so only to perform some constructive work. Retrenchment, village uplift, physical culture, sanitation, expansion of education, adjustment of taxation in order to give relief to the poor and transfer the burden to the rich, more employment to Indians, help industries, banking, shipping and insurance and a steady progress towards control of military and eventually attainment of full self-Government. This is the programme which alone could attract the Congressmen to work the reform. This is all that I have told.

In reply to this they say, "The Bill will certainly give power to the Congressmen, all that you want. You fellows cannot imagine the alarm that this Bill has caused, not only among the opponents of the Bill but also among the supporters. Opponents revolted and opposed the Bill and called it a piece of surrender."

Supporters supported, because of their loyalty, but privately they overwhelmed us with warnings about its disastrous effect on the rule of Great Britain.” “It was great courage,” they say, “on our part of Baldwin, Hoare and Halifax to get this Bill through. It is the grossest injustice to them and all other well-wishers of India not to appreciate their courage, the sacrifice of their party and friendly ties, and the strain on their health which this Bill has caused. There could be no unkindlier out to them than to say that they have done all this to tighten the grip. Where was the necessity? Was the grip any weaker? Tremendous power has been transferred, of which you have no idea. British rule is ending. No one can take the power back once it is transferred and it has been transferred. Of course in the Bill it looks as if all the powers are reserved to Governors and Governor-General, but does not this correspond to the position of the King and the House of Lords in England? Safeguards are in your interests. Who would be fool enough to meddle with your affairs of the Minister, so long as he does not want to create chaos or anarchy. And surely no Minister would think of creating chaos or anarchy. The only battle that you will have to fight will be the battle for the control of the Army. But if you control the whole Government machinery and work tactfully it would be easy for you to fight and win the battle. Instrument of Instructions provides joint consultation with Ministers in military matters. Congressmen, never having worked the Government machinery, do not realise that the safeguards are simply lock and key for the safety of the house and not a hindrance for the man who wants to go and live in it. You are talking of small things like village uplift, education and all that; it will be your Government entirely. You have to lay down your policy and carry your legislature with you and then carry on any programme you like (It is no use my pointing out to them that 80% of the revenue is already mortgaged to military service and debts, as it would have been futile for me to open this question any more, at any rate at this stage when we have to be satisfied with a modest ambition). No one is going to interfere with your plan.” As regards the prevailing atmosphere in India. they say, “We fully recognise it, but we could not help the agitation of the diehards. It was not an easy thing for Mr. Baldwin, Lord Halifax and Sir Samuel Hoare, all Tories, to carry this Bill



through a Tory Parliament with the diehards fighting like mad bulls. We wish you could make your friends in India realise this. Of course, had there been a different Viceroy and Gandhi found no mutual liking. But now that this Bill is passed something has to be done to improve the psychology. We admit that the psychology count more than the contents of the Bill. We must, if possible, get Gandhi on our side. We entirely agree with you on the principle; the only question is—how to do it?”

I may mention in this connection that I am rather impressed with their sincerity. When men like Zetland, Butler, Lothian and Sir Findlater Stewart talk in such a manner assuring me that the safeguards are not meant for meddling with the affairs of the Ministers, I cannot help feeling that they are talking with sincerity. I could not believe that all this talking merely represents hollow sentiments. Mere sweet words have never deceived me in my business dealings and I would be very surprised if I am carried away in this respect by their excellent behaviour and eloquence. In any case, you should judge things for yourself, because even if I am deceived I am making no commitment, except this, that they must establish personal contact with you and come to an agreement about the working of the reforms. This ends the gist of the talk, my pleading and their reply. I hope it will not all end in smoke.

The following questions or suggestions have been put from those who matter, which are rather significant :

(1) “With whom to come to an understanding?” I replied, “Mohammedans should be ruled out because they do not oppose the reforms. We have no desire to encroach upon their rights. Liberals have no following and so need not be worried about. Communists can also be ruled out because they are part of the Congress, but if they are to be treated as separate they need not be thought of because they have no desire to come to any compromise. The only body left therefore is the Congress and in dealing with the Congress you have to deal with Gandhiji because he alone could deliver the goods.”

(2) “Would Gandhiji be able to deliver the goods?” I replied, “Yes.”

(3) “What would be the condition for an understanding?”



I replied, "Mutual trust and friendship should be the basis. The constitution should be worked with a view to leading India towards progress and Dominion Status. Great Britain to help." They replied to this that Dominion Status or friendship is not going to flow out of a legal document, it has only to come out of hard work and will be realised more by the efforts of India than the efforts of Great Britain. But of course they say "We will always be helpful."

(4) "We hate the words 'Pact or Treaty'." They say there is strong prejudice against those words just now in England. Prejudices on both sides must be recognised. I saw to this, "I do not care about the words so long as the substance is achieved. Are they not sending Anthony Eden to France, Italy and other places for talking matters over and getting mutual understanding? Are they not still talking to Ireland?" Understanding is the main point, but have they any other alternative? To this they reply, "Suppose after personal contact and understanding there was a solemn declaration from this side, say from the King and a reply by the Congress?" To this I say, "I do not mind this so long as there is a mutual understanding about the obligations of both sides." I tell them that a pact is better in their interests since it binds the other side, but I don't mind anything so long as it is understood what is meant.

(5) "Who is to meet Mr. Gandhi?" I say, "Obviously the Viceroy has to break the ice because otherwise others cannot talk, but merely meeting the Viceroy would not be very helpful. Someone else must handle Mr. Gandhi. I suggest the name of Anderson." I am asked : "What about Emerson? Does Gandhi like him?" I say, "I do not know." They tell me he is very good.

(6) "Is Gandhi a practical man?" I replied : "Halifax, Hoare, Smuts and Findlater Stewart can give certificate. Myself, a business man, would not run after a sentimentalist."

(7) "Can Mr. Gandhi make the following statement after the personal touch and after our solemn declaration : 'This reforms is not good, it is not what I wanted, but I am assured of the goodwill and support for doing constructive work, and to help my country I will give it a fair chance?'" To this I replied, "Yes, he may say this. I have very good

hopes provided you know how to deal with him. If you can be honest with him let your heart be open and put all your difficulties before him, he will help."

(8) Then they say, "The greatest difficulty about Mr. Gandhi is that he has no constitutional position, although revered and loved by nine-tenth per cent of his people. We English people are accustomed to deal with men who have some constitutional position." To this I replied, "Would you wait until he becomes a Minister, because in that case, you will have to wait until Doomsday?" Then I am told, "Unfortunately his meeting with the Viceroy has assumed the importance of the meeting of two enemy leaders." To this I replied, "It is your own creation. Gandhiji met Lord Chelmsford as a friend and again Lord Reading and again Lord Irwin before the pacts were concluded."

(9) "Would you wait until the next Viceroy?" I say. "It would be very late."

I hope these questions will give you just the sense of the way the wind is blowing.

Now a few words about Halifax, Butler and Lord Derby. Butler deliberately asked me about our impression in India of Lord Halifax. I said, "He is still loved but we think he is a discredited man and has lost his influence over Indian affairs and that Englishmen in India dislike him most." He said, "I wish to correct you. Nothing is further from the truth than to say that he is discredited. He is very influential and he has not forgotten India. India is the mission of his life." Mr. Butler is a very capable and intelligent man, with a wide outlook. He has no tinge of racial bias or superiority. He is very distressed at the way in which we suspect their motives. He is giving me every possible help. But the most charming personality I have come across is Lord Derby. He is very rich and influential. He stands on no ceremony. When I wanted to see him, he at once come to my hotel rather than see me at his own place. He will arrange any interviews for me that I want. He has told me to ring him up whenever I need his help and he will either come to me or send for me. He talked to me with great paternal affection and I liked the man very much.

Now I think you have to write to me. You may hand over



what you have to say to my man who will post it from Delhi by Air. I hope I am representing you correctly and faithfully. I have to work hard against genuine misunderstanding in this atmosphere. When I got Mahadevbhai's letter from Quetta my heart simply broke. What a great contrast between the atmosphere prevailing there and the one prevailing here? I did not imagine the difference between the two in India. I think this is mostly the fault of the machinery and while I find men most congenial and nice machinery will be fully oiled, that is all I can say. I see in your every action an effort to remove misunderstanding. Only you could do it under such exasperating circumstances. It was remarked by an eminent friend : "We are accustomed to practice. Mr. Lloyd George was a very big man so long as he was in office, but now, however we may respect him or anyone else, we could owe no allegiance to him, or give any efforts to his views so long as he is out of India. You should not forget that Mr. Gandhi is out of office. It would be quite different when you have your own Government. Civilians would simply be your slaves; today they cannot be. The change would not be a miracle because they are taught to obey only their masters." Well, let me wait for the next step from Sir Findlater Stewart.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshayamdas

## 44

### **Interview with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald** (Talk lasted thirty-five minutes)

July 1, 1935

"How is India," he asked. I said, "very unhappy." He said, "everybody is." I said, "You have given us a constitution which you think is a sure advance and is likely to lead us towards our goal, whereas we think this is a retrograde step likely to tighten the grip. We feel this because of the atmosphere in India. We are treated like lepers with distrust. You deliver sympathetic speeches but they do not carry us very far. We want sympathetic action. There is no human



contact. Whenever we offer co-operation for any good thing it is refused and we are snubbed. Mr. Gandhi is treated as an outlaw and in this atmosphere you want us to appreciate the reforms. It is natural that we should suspect it and your motives. You are throwing away seeds without properly cultivating the land and providing water for irrigation. You cannot expect a good crop." He said, "You are absolutely right. Human contact is very essential but there have been difficulties. The Viceroy is a good man in himself and Mr. Gandhi is a good man too, but they cannot come together. It is like two pieces of good music. They are both good if separately sung, but if sung together there is no harmony, that is the trouble. Now who is going to be the next Viceroy?" he asked. I smiled and said, "You put me that question. A man who does not know the secrets. How could I say. But others talk of Linlithgow, the Governor of Bengal, Lord Lothian and Lord Percy." I also added: "Your name and Hoare's name too have been mentioned." He got a little serious and said, "You see a Provincial Governor cannot become a Viceroy. Lothian I can say is out of the picture, but it cannot. You know how I love India. I was responsible for the continuance of the R.T.C. principle. When the Government changed I made it a condition that this question cannot be dropped. And we should revive the R.T.C. principle now again, not on that scale but on a smaller scale. We must make a sympathetic beginning. Many men want the safeguards to be used immediately and if the Congress comes into conflict the safeguards will come into prominence, but otherwise nobody here wants to use the safeguards. Congress will be playing into the hands of the Die-hards if they make a beginning with an idea of smashing the constitution, but we, on our part, have to ensure a sympathetic beginning. The whole thing is like a garden. You have to develop it with patience and you have to keep patience but you must take the pledge from us of sympathetic action. I entirely agree with you that something should be done to ensure that atmosphere." I said, "You have said something more beautiful than I wanted to say." Then he went on thinking aloud just, looking at the ceiling. "How to do it. It is a problem. We have not made a beginning as yet. It is just as much a problem as it is for me to find the rooms in my new offices. I do not know

all the alleys and the lanes. I am just getting accustomed to this new building, but yours is only a passing phase, but a big phase, it must be faced. It would be stupid not to face it but I do not know how to help you. I think I should go to India in the winter and see Mr. Gandhi. I may go for a rest and as a tourist. There are difficulties in the way of my going, but I wish I could go. I will mark the time. If I go I must see my friend Mr. Gandhi. I do not care what they think about it. I must see him, and I know that if I see him I shall be able to settle up the affairs. But just now I do not see the light. I have just retired from very heavy work and I am still suffering from insomnia. I am settling up my new house. It is all confusion and chaos in my new house. No peg to hang my coat on and no shelf to keep by books in. You know I am a poor man. I will be able to put the house in order in a week's time, then I will think about the things more, but just now I cannot see how I could help." During the course of conversation he repeated thrice his desire to go to India and then I said that if he could not go someone else should talk to Gandhiji. Why should not the Governor of Bengal talk?

He left proud of the Governor of Bengal in the fact that he was a Scotchman. "But you have to help." I said, "You are a cabinet Minister, you could do a lot." He said, "Did you talk to India Office?" I said, "Yes. Lord Zetland is a good man." he said. I said, "Yes, but I do not know whether he has the same determination as that of Hoare." He said, "Hoare was convinced about the justice of the case in defending the Bill." Zetland already sympathises with India therefore his support may be rather remote, but I do not know. In any case the initiative has to come from the Secretary of State. We meet in Cabinet once a week only for two hours and so I do not see much of Zetland, but if he takes up something it must go through. He is wide awake to the fact that if the reforms do not get good support, his reputation must suffer. Therefore they will all listen to you. I said, "Lord Zetland agrees with me and Sir Findlater Stewart helps me a lot, but no one yet talks of the next step." I told him how many men I had met. He remarked, "You spreading your nets very wide, I am glad. But don't think they are not thinking of the next step. They are thinking about it but they cannot say just now. They must listen to you."



Don't go to India with the impression that there is no next step. You will succeed. I wish I could go to India, but meantime I will think over the matter as to how to help you. You should see me again."

I told him that in order to get rid of his insomnia he should make changes in his diet, and how I had managed it. He said, "I want a doctor friend otherwise I do not believe in doctors. I breakfast with Horder every morning and that helps me a lot." He talked of old days when he went to India and had a lot of shooting. He talked of some of the old men who were very nice.

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### Note

July 2, 1935

Lunched with Mr. and Mrs. Butler. No progress. He said S.O.S. would have a freer talk after the Bill passes the Committee stage. He said Zetland was very sympathetic but may have trouble from India.

Tea with Mr. Lansbury and Major Attlee at 4 p.m. The former was very straight and sincere, the latter hobnobbing with the Tories. Both dull and expressed helplessness. They said they had done their best. I should know, they said, that they were in a minority.

Dined with Labour Members at the House of Commons at 7.45. Major Attlee, Rhy Davies, W. Paling, Seymour Cocks, Tom Smith, Tom Williams, Morgan Jones, John Willmont and Charles Edwards were present. I gave them some home truths and saw some of them were irritated. Almost all of them unintelligent and dull. Attlee somewhat reactionary. He tried to defend Quetta action on the ground that we may have made political use of the situation. I said, "You want us to put our



faith in your sympathy and goodwill while you continue to distrust our motives and you define for us every time what is good. Even when our people are in distress, you alone can decide what is best in the circumstances." He said, "I only wanted to put forward the Government point of view but both sides were at fault." He further said, "You made a blunder in not settling up things in 1930 when we were in power." I said, "you could not have given us any Bill because the House of Lords would have blocked your way." I said, "Your Labour Members are accustomed to deliver speeches in high flown language with no intention to fulfil the promises you make. This irritated some of them." I diverted the conversation to economics but again India came in. I said, "Your present standard of living rests upon external trade and foreign investments. You know that external trade is diminishing and some time foreign investments will have to be written off. Would you then be able to maintain your present standard only with your internal production?" They said, "No." I asked, "How do you then reconcile your ambition for a still higher standard with your advocacy for self-determination for India?" They did not like this anomaly to be pointed out. I told them stories that I had heard. I asked a prominent Labour member why they put Mr. Benn in India Office when he knew little of India. "Because," I was told, "a brilliant man would come into conflict with the Services and the Government of India there, so Mr. MacDonald very cleverly put into every office a man who ensured smooth sailing and would always yield to the Services." I also told him that when Lord Passfield took charge of his department in 1924 he assembled the civilians of his department and said, "Gentlemen, I know you have been the masters in the past and you will continue to be so in the future, so carry on." One of the guests said it was true and added that they could not live up to their professions. "We passed all such resolutions in the last Conference that if put into effect they would use up all wealth of the world." Major Attlee did not like this and got further irritated. He then disputed everything that I said. He said, "Labour was your best friend. Gandhi was inconsistent, an astute politician, and never meant what he said. Congress was full of corruption. None of the big leaders in India wanted adult franchise." He went on saying all such things. I

said. "Major Attlee, evidently you know Gandhiji better than myself. I came to England to study the English people but evidently you want to teach me something about my own country, but I am not disirous to learn it from you." Then we all cooled down. Attlee and other members said that I should see some of the young Tories. All agreed that the atmosphere required improving but they were helpless. They had no power and no influence and they might also have added, no intelligence! They suffer from inferiority complex. They would rather have Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy than have anyone from their own party. They have great awe for Tories and men like Lord Derby who is very rich.

About the Constitution they said, "You are talking too much about reservation of powers to the Governor-General ignoring the fact that every Constitution in the world has got some provisions for the final authority and we too have got that in the King."

At last we parted as friends. I do not think it was waste of time.

## 46

### Note

July 2, 1935

LORD LINLITHGOW. Tall, well built, not brilliant but capable and sound; no imagination, matter of fact and at the same time straightforward, frank and well-intentioned.

I began my usual argument. There were two distinct atmospheres, one in English representing goodwill and sympathy for future, another in India representing stern and stiff administration. The people in India read the Bill in the light of the Administration there. Natural result of such a position would be breakdown of the Constitution and further bitterness. The necessity of creating a good beginning to start the new Constitution.



He listened with great interest and said he agreed entirely but asked if I had any positive suggestion to make. I spoke about personal contact and agreement. He agreed about personal contact but was not in favour of any fact; suggested mutual understanding. He said that the diehards here represented the older school with Indian experience, but that adjustment, almost a new oriental was taking place in England. New blood, not over 45, wanted to be liberal. Adjustment must take place in India too. It must be realised that there was goodwill and the goal could be reached through the Constitution.

I said it could be but not without personal contact. He said that Mr. Gandhi will have to make up his mind on one of the two issues. For the regeneration of the Indian nation which is the better road? A road of personal contact, friendship and evolution through it or a bolder step of disturbance and disorder spread over a number of year which may give liberty or may result in a setback.

I replied that Mr. Gandhi never believed in bloody revolution. I would not mind it but I knew it would not help us and therefore I also desired association and friendliness, Mr. Gandhi was quite clear on the point and I produced his letter to Agatha Harrison. He read it with interest and said, "Yes, it is very important. I agree with you but I have no scheme in my head, I will think it over. If anything is not possible I will say so frankly. Meanwhile you see other people and let me know about the 10th when we will have another talk. But since you have expressed your opinion on the method of achieving liberty, allow me to express mine. Bloody revolution would be a bold but bad step. The world is very small now with the transport facilities and all that is not so easy to succeed. On the other hand, working the Constitution in a friendly atmosphere would lead to certain results."

I said that I agreed with the conclusion but not with the argument. Today the Constitution is a body without life. Even the most handsome body without life is only fit for cremation. I want it to be body animate with real life. Personal contact and mutual understanding alone could infuse such life.

He again agreed and deplored the fact that the British element in the Civil Service and in trade in India was not representative of the best of England.



July 2, 1935

DEAR LORD ZETLAND,

The other day when I saw your Lordship, you referred to your efforts to remove misunderstanding when you were the Governor of Bengal. I pointed out that you did not leave behind you the slightest trace of bitterness and I also said that Lord Irwin, as he was then, although he put nearly 60,000 men in jail, left behind him nothing but pleasant relations. My point is that you can always avoid misunderstanding by human touch. I am enclosing herewith a cutting from *The Hindustan Times*, which is a pro-Congress paper and you will be interested to read in it the confirmation of what I said about you.

During the course of conversation, you also asked whether Mr. Gandhi was a practical man and I said that Lord Halifax, Sir Samuel Hoare, Sir Findlater Stewart and General Smuts would most likely give Mr. Gandhi a certificate of his practicability. I tried to explain his book *Home Rule*. I enclose herewith a copy of the *Harijan*, which is edited by Mr. Gandhi and think this may explain his efforts to reconcile idealism with practicability.

I am enclosing a letter from Mr. Gandhi himself written to Miss Agatha Harrison received by her by the last mail. Miss Harrison and other friends have recently been insisting on Mr. Gandhi the need of sending some Indian leaders to England to come in contact with the people here and Mr. Gandhi has been doubting the efficacy of such a course. He was again pressed recently and this is his reply. I especially send this letter as it will show your Lordship the friend in Mr. Gandhi.

I hope your Lordship will not grudge this encroachment upon your time but, feel that by keeping you acquainted with the situation in India, I am helping the cause of reconciliation so dear to your own heart.

Yours sincerely,  
G. D. Birla

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July 2, 1935

MY DEAR SIR FINDLATER STEWART,

This letter with its enclosed cutting is for Lord Zetland but I am sending it to you in order that if you approve of it, you may forward the same to its proper destination.

I have seen Lord Linlithgow today. I am meeting Lord Halifax on the 5th and meeting Lord Salisbury after that. This ends my first round of visits. I have not come across anyone who disagrees with the desirability of creating a proper atmosphere, but of course the next step is still in the dark. I dare say you are thinking about it. I hope to meet you when you are free. Meanwhile, please continue to guide me where necessary.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

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*Copy*

GROSVENOR HOUSE,  
PARK LANE, LONDON W. 1,  
July 5, 1935

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I reached here on the 5th of last month and I am writing this very nearly a month after my arrival. For the first few weeks I had very little to do and so nothing to write. Now I think I must as I may need your guidance. So far I have been able to meet Lord Zetland, Lord Lothian, Lord Derby, Lord Linlithgow, Lord Halifax, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Butler and Sir Findlater Stewart twice. Besides seeing Mr. Butler. I also lunched with him and his wife. Lord Derby is arranging for me to see Lord Salisbury and I am also expecting to meet Mr. Baldwin. Lord Reading is ill, therefore I cannot meet him.

I also lunched with a number of city friends like Sir Henry Strakosch, Sir Thos. Catto, Sir Charles Berry, Sir Felix Pole,



Sir Walter Layton, Sir Basil Blackett, Mr. Wallace and Sir George Schuster, etc. I have also lunched twice at the House of Commons, once with the members of the Manchester Group and at another time with some important Labour Leaders. I have not yet been able to meet Sir Samuel Hoare. He is very busy with the Foreign Office but has asked me to remind him again, which I have done. Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George I will see last of all and before leaving this country I hope also to see some important Churchmen and journalists. Sir Findlater Stewart, who is your great admirer and friend and also a friend of Mr. Gandhi, has helped me a great deal and I think for my job he counts the most. As you will see, I have completed the first round of visits and I hope to begin the second one shortly.

These are the points that I impressed upon them. First, I pointed out that there was a general feeling in India that the Bill was a retrograde step and I explained the reasons for such feeling. If one read the Bill, every whit of power was reserved to the Governors and the Governor-General. I am told, and rightly, that in England too the last word rests with the king and also that no Governor or Governor-General would be stupid enough to meddle with the affairs of his Ministers. I accepted this but then I explained that in India, people were judging the Bill not by the atmosphere of friendship and goodwill prevailing in England, but the atmosphere of mutual distrust prevailing in India. The result was that the Indians felt that all these powers reserved for the Governors and Governor-General were just to tighten the grip. I thus tried to impress upon them my conclusion that the atmosphere and not the Bill was the more important. The reforms would work well if the atmosphere was good. It would not work if it was bad. In the absence of good atmosphere, the reforms would fail but that was not my only apprehension. The outcome of such failure would be most disastrous to the future of India and to the relations of the two countries. The Services in India had got into the habit of looking upon the popular element with suspicion. This is the worst phase of the present distrustful atmosphere which was liable to be accentuated. I gave them several examples. The same remarks applied to the Congress which suspected every move of the Government even if good. Mutual co-operation in this atmosphere became impossible and along with it any good construc-



tive work. Congressmen, due to the present atmosphere, were getting more irresponsible, and there was the danger of the Right Wing being wiped out of the picture by the Left Wing, which has already gained ground, and in order to vie with the Left Wing, the Right Wing may adopt wrecking tactics. It was essential therefore that my personal contact, the Right Wing of the Congress should be convinced that there was great field for them under the Reforms to do constructive work and lead India towards its final goal. There was another serious development—an offspring of the present atmosphere towards which I drew the attention of friends here. The circumstances were misleading the Mohammedans into the belief that their worst actions would be condoned by the Government. A serious reaction at some stage is bound to set in. In conclusion, I said that Gandhiji had kept his head above water in all these difficulties but that he, their best friend, was being ousted between the two, the Government and the Communist.

All this had a very good reception. I was told in reply how distressed they felt that the great courage shown by Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Halifax and others to get this Bill passed in spite of Tory's opposition and at the expense of their personal friendship and party ties was not appreciated in India. They told me of the great powers we were going to wield. They assured me that the Governors and Governor-General would not only meddle with the affairs of the Ministers but would have a joint consultation even over the affairs which came under the direct responsibility of the former. I must say that I was very much impressed by the sincerity and goodwill prevailing here but I explained to them how impossible it was to appreciate all this in India in the absence of the proper atmosphere. Friends here agreed with me that the psychology in India requires to be improved and I was asked for concrete suggestions. I told them that the ice has to be broken through in Delhi and that a man like Sir John Anderson should talk to Gandhiji and get a rapprochement. They asked me if Sir John would be able to handle Mr. Gandhi, to which I replied, "Yes." Then they asked me what I thought of Lord Brabourne, Lord Erskine or the Governor of Punjab. I told them I could not say anything because I had no personal acquaintance with the others. They asked me what could be the basis for understanding to which I

replied, mutual trust and friendship. The constitution to be worked with a view to leading India towards progress and Dominion Status; Great Britain to help. Sir Findlater Stewart replies to this that we have to be more precise and he would exercise his mind. I am told that pacts and treaties and such words were not in favour to which I replied that I did not mind anything so long as the substance was achieved. What I wanted was mutual understanding, both parties knowing their obligations. I was given a hint; supposing there was some kind of declaration from the King, would Mr. Gandhi respond in suitable terms? To which I replied, "Yes, provided he is handled properly beforehand. In order to get him round you have to be frank and honest with him and tell him of your difficulties. If you open your heart to him, he will always help. He is after quality, and not quantity. He would not care about the measure of advance, but the way in which you introduce the advance." The problem still seems to be who is to do the job and how. I hope there will be no difficulties from Delhi.

Sir Findlater Stewart who, as I mentioned before, has helped me a lot, has now promised to think of the next step. Lord Zetland has asked me to keep in touch with Sir Findlater Stewart.

I feel happy in telling your Excellency that I have been received here with the utmost courtesy and with the best of goodwill. I could not expect a better atmosphere but my heart breaks when I get news from India. I wonder why they could not avoid misunderstanding about Quetta. Was it not possible for Delhi to take non-officials into their confidence as such things become inevitable in the absence of personal contact? As I told Lord Zetland, Lord Halifax put 60,000 men in jail and you have interned 2,500 men without trial, but though there may be disagreement about the policy there is no bitterness. The reason is obvious. I feel that the charm of personal contact and seeing things from the opponent's points of view is not fully realised in India.

When talking to Mr. MacDonald, I was confronted with a funny question—who was likely to be the next Viceroy. I told him who should know better than him; but I added that the Press discussed the name of Lord Linlithgow and Sir John Anderson. Mr. MacDonald took great pride in the fact that you were a Scotchman but he added that it was not easy for a



Provincial Governor to become Viceroy. There was no precedent! So this is how the business is run. In my own business, I should never go by precedent.

I am taking your Excellency for the letters which you gave me. I have not yet used them and will do so only when I find it necessary. Meanwhile, please help me from your end and also guide me. I have undertaken a tremendous task and you will see, as Mr. MacDonald remarked, I have spread my nets pretty wide, but the last word rests with the India Office and the Secretariat at Delhi. Here they have given me time and ears ungrudgingly even though I know everyone is very busy. Lord Derby came to my hotel and said whenever I wanted his help I had simply to 'phone him and he would come or send for me'. What better atmosphere could I expect? But this will not lead me very far. Initiative has now to come from the India Office and must be supported by Delhi. I hope you would help where you think you can. I wish I could export the atmosphere from here. I feel somewhat disappointed when no effort has been made so far. There is no reason to feel sceptical about the thing when no effort has yet been made. I am told that so long as the Bill was before the Legislature, any conciliatory action may have scared the diehards but now that question no longer arises; so we must work to get a good start. Everyone here realises this, but I have yet to talk of the next step and I hope your Excellency will continue to help.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

H.E. SIR JOHN ANDERSON

## 50

### **Interview with Lord Halifax** (Talk lasted forty-five minutes)

LONDON,  
July 5, 1935

I told him the whole story beginning in 1932 and ending in my visit to London. I regretted my luck that I should have



seen him a month after my arrival. I told him I had to knock on many doors, and he added that they were all opened. I said "Yes." He only once interrupted when I told him how I was confronted with a question whether Emerson and Mr. Gandhi liked mutually, and I related how I replied that I thought so. Lord Halifax said that it was very remarkable how the two men had taken to like each other only after a few minutes of their talk. I said it was because Emerson was straight and frank. Then, after I had finished, Lord Halifax said that he saw the force of my words and he agreed with every one of them. I had laid my fingers on the most important fact and that was personal touch. Now it was a personal matter as regards the appeal to Mr. Gandhi. The present Viceroy could not. Psychology requires to be improved, and he agreed with me that Mr. Gandhi was always after quality and not after quantity. He agreed that the Bill plus the spirit was essential. But he could not give me any concrete proposal. He has been thinking over it since I came to London. He knew about my talk with Lord Lothian and he said he would find out something. It was suggested to him by Lord Lothian that Lord Zetland should fly over to India for a few days to improve the atmosphere. He said, "I do not like this idea because it will put the Government of India into a false position." I agreed with Lord Halifax. He said, "I am putting forward another suggestion and I am only thinking aloud. Suppose some of us here, myself, Zetland and Lothian and some central people in India advertised a letter in the Indian Press making a public appeal to Mr. Gandhi for co-operation; do you think it would have any effect?" I said, "No. The so-called central leaders have in the past tried to get the best of both sides and therefore they do not command any confidence of Mr. Gandhi. Your appeal could not have much effect unless it was made in a personal way privately and not through the Press. It would have more effect if you did it by private letters." He agreed. He said that whatever steps were to be taken the difficulty was this, that the Government feared that they may appear to be binding to Mr. Gandhi and it might create an impression that nothing else mattered except negotiations with Mr. Gandhi. He added that on account of this any public negotiations had become impossible. I said I criticised the public negotiations on different

grounds. The Englishmen in service, in India, were all against Gandhi-Irwin pact. This had discredited Lord Irwin. If there was any further talk of negotiating publicly, the service and British merchants would try to create circumstances which may spoil the whole atmosphere. I would have the negotiations in a most informal manner and without making any fuss, but I strongly resented the attitude of the Government who fear their prestige. They ought to know that they would not be the Government after eighteen months and not their prestige but ours that counted. The Government of eighteen months ahead would be composed of the position of today. Partnership could be proceeded not by distrustful attitude but by a friendly spirit and therefore this kind of mentality in the Government of India must be changed. He agreed about the danger of publicity but said, "Do you think if I write a personal letter to Mr. Gandhi it would have any effect?" I said, "Great, but I would not ask you to write one just now. First of all you have to make your mind quite clear about the next step. If you wrote to Mr. Gandhi he is bound to be affected by your appeal and if nothing comes out he would feel not irritated but a little disappointed." He said, "But what can I pledge?" I said, "You cannot pledge anything except your support and when you pledge your support you have to see a little ahead." He agreed and said he would think over it and if there is anything which he could usefully write to Mr. Gandhi he will be prepared to do it. Then he said, "Suppose we wait until the next Viceroy goes," and asked me if I had talked to Lord Linlithgow. To this I told him, "Yes I had, but waiting until April would be too late. The Congress session will be held in March and so the die will be cast." He said, "That is a very important argument, but could we do anything to prevent Congress getting deeper into things until the new Viceroy goes out? Do you think Mr. Gandhi could help in this respect?" I said, "Certainly he could, provided I go back with some message and hope, and you too may have to write." I suggested that the best plan would be, that until the real contact begins with the Viceroy the ice must be broken through in Delhi and then a series of interviews should continue between some Governor and Mr. Gandhi. This will prepare the ground for the next Viceroy. He liked the idea. He knew the episode of Riza Ail's party. He said he would be seeing Lord



Lothian tomorrow and also Lord Zetland and would try to find out something concrete and would then talk to me again. He would also help me seeing Mr. Baldwin.

It appears from the conversation that Lord Halifax is still a most powerful man. He talked with full confidence and frankness and I found that all the time he was thinking furiously as to what could be done. He is very friendly towards Gandhiji and wants sincerely to do good in India. I think he feels a moral responsibility in the matter.

## 51

### Interview with Sir Samuel Hoare

July 8, 1935

Interview was fixed at 5. I had to wait for half an hour. The Secretary came and profusely apologised for keeping me waiting. He explained that Sir S. was held up with someone else and then at half past five I got in his room. He was very sorry for keeping me waiting and further expressed regret that he had a sudden call from the House of Commons and so would not be able to have a lengthy talk. So I had to finish all in eight minutes and we made a very good use of it.

I told him I had nothing to add to what I had written from India. The atmosphere in England was better, but it was all rotten in India and in this atmosphere we could not put any good interpretation on the motives of the authors of the Bill. Personal touch should be the first step and then an understanding. He said he was keeping personal touch in England and was always accessible to any Indian, that came to see him. He has recognised all along the virtue of human contact, but in India he could not help. He said, "There are nearly 12 months between the Election for the Provincial Legislature and now. I think there would be a good deal of development before then and we shall before then try to develop personal contact and mutual understanding." I said, "But the Congress Session



would be held in March, while the new Viceroy would go in April so it would be too late. Something should be done before that." He said, "Could not the Congress Session be postponed until the new Viceroy goes?" He hoped the new Viceroy would reach India by the first week of April and it would be very unwise if any commitments were made by the Congress before they saw the new Viceroy initiating a new policy. He added that, "We were determined to make the Reforms a success. We wanted to take the utmost out of it in India's favour. Churchill stood by himself, but the other diehards wanted to work the Bill and it would be very unfortunate if the Indians did not realise the sincerity behind our efforts." He added, "I should like you to assure Mr. Gandhi that we wish well by India, and he should prevent the Congress from making any fresh commitments." I said, "I would certainly do my utmost, but would you be prepared to write a letter to Mr. Gandhi on these lines?" He replied he would have to consult Lord Zetland. He would not like to embarrass the existing Viceroy. I said, "You consider it," and he agreed. I said, "Is it not possible to break the ice at Delhi, and then let Mr. Gandhi talk to Sir John Anderson?" He said, "Sir John Anderson is a nice man to talk to Mr. Gandhi and I would put this proposition to Lord Zetland." He again expressed regret that he had to leave me so soon. He said he was not very bad in health just now, but he was very bad at one time, and immediately he came to his new office, it looked as if the whole world were going to collapse. He however expressed the hope that he would meet again at the King's Garden Party and then we would talk again.

He asked about the health of Gandhiji. I said he was well. I asked him who was the next Viceroy. He said it was not yet decided. But they would send a man who would work the Reforms most sympathetically and in the best interest of India. We were quite sincere about that. Thus we finished the previous eight minutes, the shortest interview I ever had. I could not doubt the sincerity of what he said and it made further clear that this Untouchability is a product of India and not of Whitehall. Sir S. did not conceal his views about the lack of personal contact. He did not like indirect election but was helpless.

**Interview with Miss Rathbone**

July 8, 1935

She has no influence, but she pretends as though she has and so wishes to justify things on moral grounds. Remarked that India was not prepared for democracy and so safeguard is essential. She said the feeling in England had stiffened against India. "You cannot bully." I replied, "I did not know that. You may say we are not strong enough to bully, but to say that England is not capable of being bullied is to say the least of truth. She has been bullied by Germany and also by Italy. Mr. Anthony Eden would not run from place to place kotowing a few months back. Now when both the Nations are bullying you are yielding."

Rathbone said, "We had a bad conscience about Germany," to which I retorted, "and you think you had a good one about India." She said, "We could not go far because Indians were hostile towards England." I said, "Then why talk of concession and conscience. You should know whether you are rewarding or punishing hostility."

*Copy*

July 8, 1935

DEAR SIR FINDLATER STEWART,

I have finished the first round of my visits and thought that the time had come when in order to clarify my views I may put on paper all that I have talked, and the enclosure is the result.

Probably Lord Zetland and you will send for me after the Bill has passed the Committee stage, in the House of Lords.

As you are all booked for days and days ahead, I am writ-

ing this not to remind you because I know you have got the things in your mind, but to say whether it would be possible for you to fix in up a date in advance. Lord Zetland told me that I should keep in touch with you, but I have not been bothering you because you will send for me when I am wanted.

Meanwhile, is it possible for me to have a few minutes with Mr. Baldwin.

I understand that Lord Brabourne is here. Could I see him, and if so, would you kindly arrange it?

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

SIR FINDLATER STEWART, KT.  
PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY  
INDIA OFFICE S.W.1.

54

*Copy*

July 8, 1935

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

I have practically finished the first round of my visits and I am just beginning the second round. Now should we meet again? I have not yet been able to get any idea about the next step, but I know it is being considered, and I also know that you are helping. In any case whenever you think we should meet, please drop me a line.

Before I go back to my country, I should like to take something constructive in my pocket. Besides I should like to meet Mr. Issac Foot and also Mr. Lloyd George. For the latter, I have got the letter of introduction.

I wonder whether you could arrange both these interviews for me.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

THE MARQUIS OF LOTHIAN  
17 WATERLOO PLACE  
S. W. 1.



55

*Copy*

July 8, 1935

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

After I met your Lordship, I met Lord Halifax and I am meeting Sir Samuel Hoare this afternoon. Probably I would be able to get the next step after the Bill in the House of Lords is over in the Committee Stage.

I wonder when you wish me to see you again? I know you are a very busy man and therefore I am writing this just to remind you, or as an alternative, could you honour me by dining with me one of these days next week?

Sir George Schuster had asked me to tell you something more of what I have been doing in connection with the village work. This I will do when next we meet.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

THE MARQUIS OF LINLITHGOW  
29 CHESHAM PLACE  
S. W. 1

56

July 8, 1935

DEAR LORD HALIFAX,

In order to clarify my own views, I have put on paper all that I have been talking to friends since I have come here. I am enclosing a copy of the same.

If your Lordship thinks that I have been able to put my case well, then may I send a copy of the same to Lord Linlithgow? I have already sent a copy of it to Sir Findlater Stewart.

May I remind your Lordship of my desire to have a few minutes with Mr. Baldwin?

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

LORD HALIFAX  
WAR OFFICE

57

*Copy*

DERBY HOUSE,  
STARTFORD PLACE, W.1,

*Confidential*

July 9, 1935

DEAR SIR,

Many thanks for your letter. I am glad you are going to see Lord Salisbury. You will find him most interesting, and although he and I do not agree he really has the interests both of India and this country at heart. I am probably supporting him today for the first time, in a certain paragraph—to which, I am sure, you would not in any way disagree—to the effect that there should not be preference shown to foreign goods as opposed to British goods. I should never ask for a preference to be given to our goods, though I hope it may be given voluntarily, but I do not think there is any harm in carrying out what I know all of you mean, and that is what there should be differentiation against British goods.

Thank you for asking me for dinner. Alas, I am afraid I cannot possibly accept. I am engaged every night till the 22nd, when I have to go away for my cure. All the same, I am very grateful to you for the invitation.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Derby

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.

**Interview with Lord Salisbury**

July 9, 1935

Old deaf man. Not much grit or wit, but feels his responsibility. Asked me if I was attached to Gandhiji, to which I said, "Yes." He replied he had never had the privilege of meeting Mr. Gandhi. I told him about his opposition to the Bill and remarked that I too disliked it but on different grounds. It was not sufficient advance, but I said, "Can't we be friends in the working of the Bill in spite of our political difference?" He said, "Are not we already?" I said, "No. The atmosphere in India just now is full of misunderstanding and hostility." He replied he came in contact with Mr. Gour, "Doesn't he represent India?" I said, "He could not find even a constituency to stand for the Assembly." He said, "Oh yes, I knew that." He wanted a concrete suggestion. I said, "Revive the Halifax spirit." He said, "He did not agree with Halifax, but what Halifax did, he alone could do? He is a charming man. Derby is another charming man, but they did not agree." I added "and yet you could be friends." He agreed that they could be friends without agreeing on political grounds.

He admired Mr. Gandhi's saintliness, great character and good intentions, but he added, "the great mistake that you Indians make is that you are confusing great qualities with experience. England has got the experience of 1000 years behind her. You have none." I said, "Our background is far more ancient and creditable than that of England." He said, "I do not want to undervalue your great civilisation and philosophy but your country is not a democracy. You have yet to learn." I said, "Did not you make mistakes?" He said, "Yes." I added, "Because we are lacking in certain things, we are talking of friendship."

He is a nice man, but don't think he could be of much use.



59

*Copy*

July 9, 1935

MY DEAR SIR FINDLATER STEWART,

Further to my yesterday's letter and its enclosure, I am enclosing herewith an extract from a letter of Mr. Andrews written to Miss Harrison. As I find this may be of interest to you, I am sending the same.

If you think my yesterday's letter and also today's would be of some help to my mission, if they are put before the Secretary of State, then please do so. I leave the matter entirely to your discretion.

The more I think the more I am forced to the conclusion that incessant work spread over years will have to be undertaken from both sides to improve the situation. As Mr. Gandhi remarked, "Our conduct has not been uniform" and if I may say so, it has been so on both sides. So a vicious circle is formed. It has to be broken and a beginning made some day.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

SIR FINDLATER STEWART, KT.  
PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY  
INDIA OFFICE, S.W. 1

60

*Copy*

July 10, 1935

DEAR LORD DERBY,

Many thanks for your letter. On principle, I do not see any objection to your suggestion, as there can only be one case where it may be necessary to impose what you may call, a discriminatory tariff, and that would be the case where British

goods are dumped in India, with the strength of bounties or subsidies received from the Home Govt. Except this one case, I do not see of any occasion where any Indian would think of putting discriminatory tariff, against Britain, vis-a-vis other foreign imports.

There is another point on which I should like to explain the situation, viz., the Indo-Burma pact. I was one of the delegates representing the Indian interest which advised the Government to conclude this Pact, and we advised only for two years. It was the British interest in India that insisted on five years. The tug of war is not between the Manchester or the Indian cloth. It is between the Manchester cloth and British oil produced in Burma. We have consented to give preference to oil which is much greater sacrifice than the compensation that we would receive in respect of Indian cloth ; in fact, the Indian interests strongly suggested that there should be no preference on both sides, but as the oil interests very strongly favoured status quo, I tried to bring about a compromise and ultimately we all un-animously proposed pact.

I write this in order that there may be no misunderstanding between the Lancashire interest and ourselves on this point.

I am too disappointed that I will not have the pleasure of meeting you any more. I had expected to see you in Manchester when I go there some time during the next month, but as the luck would have it, I can only reciprocate your good wishes when you come to India, or if I come to this country again.

Meanwhile, may I thank you again for all the courtesies that you have shown to me during our short talk, and I need hardly say that I was very much struck with your simplicity, charm and friendliness.

*Yours very sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

THE EARL OF DERBY

61

*Copy*

88 EATON SQUARE,  
S. W. 1,  
July 10, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letter. I am very much interested in what you have put down on paper, and I should certainly send a copy to Lord Linlithgow.

I will take the first opportunity I get of seeing whether Mr. Baldwin can manage to see you. I am sure he will if he possibly can.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Halifax

*PS.* Since dictating the above, I have seen Mr. Baldwin, who will be glad to see you, but not, he is afraid, for about a week or ten days. I will ask him to get his secretary to communicate with you when he can manage it. I told him that I knew that you would do your best to accommodate yourself to his convenience as he is very much engaged.

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.

62

**Interview with Editor of "Times", Mr. Dawson**

July 10, 1935

Mr. Dawson comes at 12. Stays on till 12.30.

He was interested in what I said. He likes John Henderson like myself and will deal with it in his paper. Halifax is very influential inside cabinet, but wants to get out of politics as his people in his State are in a bad condition and so he wants to go



and live with them. He has a prickly conscience. Zetland is a nice man and very Pro-Hindu. He agrees with me that the atmosphere requires to be changed. He will come to dine with me. He agreed that Civil Servants in India became mixed up with politics but they will be all right.

63

*Copy*

July 11, 1935

DEAR MR. DAWSON,

I was interested to read the article in today's *Times* about India. You have summed up the situation very well and I am glad that you have emphasized the aspect of personal touch. I fear, however, that in order to impress those in authority, you may have to be more precise.

Dealing with the question in a general way may not help very much. I wonder whether some day you would write an article mainly on the aspect of personal touch.

As I pointed out to you, Lord Halifax put 60,000 men in gaol and yet he could command confidence. Sir John Anderson has put 2,500 men in gaol without trial, without making himself unpopular. It is because he has made his critics—by personal touch—see that the job is as unpleasant to him as to his critics.

The policy of "personal contact" was thrown to the winds immediately Lord Halifax left, and until that is restored, I do not see there is much of a chance of this Bill succeeding. We are not satisfied with the Bill but more than its quantity, we are dissatisfied with its quality. Even the proposed advance may be accepted, provided there was that mutual understanding. In the absence of the mutual understanding, the Right Wing of the Congress has to compete with the Left Wing and thus a greater and greater gulf is being created between the two nations.

People in the Government circle in India always talk of the Government prestige. They forget that the Government of to-

morrow will not be the Government of today and the prestige of tomorrow's Government counts as much as the prestige of the Government of today. The Government of today is composed of Services. Of tomorrow it will be composed of Ministers, and if the Bill is to succeed, the Service should realise this very important aspect. There is plenty of goodwill and sympathy in England, but in India, it is not realised because the pleasant weather has not yet crossed the English Channel.

I wish we could meet again and talk, and I hope you will fix up a date when you can come and dine with me.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

## 64

### **Interview with Sir Austen Chamberlain** (Commenced at 10.30 a.m.)

July 12, 1935

Talked for an hour. At the beginning appeared to be very stiff. At the conclusion very nice and pleasant. I began with my usual arguments, and after I had finished he challenged me on certain points.

“If the Viceroy does not see Mr. Gandhi, there must be cogent reasons. The Viceroy is very sympathetic and is capable of taking actions. He was not over worked or tired as I had suggested. Congress by not signing their names have insulted the King's representative. Better atmosphere could be established if both move. It cannot come only from one side. Congress have slighted the King's representative. How could there be any meeting? British rule is impartial. They are not favouring Mohammedans at the cost of Hindus. Zetland very pro-Hindu. No man could be more sympathetic. He could not interfere. The Viceroy would do what was best.”

I said, “I fear I should again explain my position. I did not want your interference. You are not in the Cabinet, you are



not the Secretary of State and you are not the Viceroy. The question of interference therefore does not arise. You can only advice. In this atmosphere the Reform can have no chance in India. Bitterness will increase after the breakdown and so will irresponsibility. I have undertaken a self-imposed task and I am baffled. I do not know how to proceed. Could you advice? I am not saying that Mohammedans are encouraged to do wrong, but I was only stating a fact when I said that a Hindu Officer had to show partiality towards a Mohammedan in order to prove his impartiality. If he did not do this, he might come in for reprimand from his superior officer." Sir Austen warmed up. "Against whom are you arguing? Are you not arguing against your own capacity to do justice and thus also arguing against Reforms." I said with equal warmth, "I am not arguing against Reforms or our own capacity. The Reforms of course nobody agrees with. If I am arguing against Reforms I do not mind, but I am arguing against your own policy which prevents the officer from doing his duty correctly." He said, "Oh, then you are charging us with partiality?" I retorted, "I feared I did and to prove I may quote Chapter and Verse." At this stage I lost all hope of leaving his house as a friend.

He impolitely said, "You can carry the views, but I cannot accept them." To which I replied, "I cannot help you, but I am stating not an opinion but a bare truth and this you can get confirmed from your own men. Sir James Grigg remarked once to me that 'every time you have to approach a Mahomedan you have to pay his price.' I do not mind your partiality, but I say you cannot claim to be impartial. The Communal Award is a glaring instance. You have given seats to the expense of Hindus." Thus I made him further angry. He said, "I fear I cannot do anything. We have given you a Bill and helped you in every possible manner. If personal contact is necessary, why then should not the Congress work for it? They are avoiding the personal contact by not signing their names. They can insult the Viceroy and yet desire personal contact." I retorted, "Let us not talk Sir Austen of Mr. Gandhi. It is individual matters. The meeting of Mr. Gandhi and the Viceroy is a matter of personal choice, but do you believe that in this atmosphere you are going to make the Reforms a success. If not with Mr. Gandhi, you have to come to agreement with some-



one who represents the country, and you have to find out yourself what someone is. I have no desire to be unpleasant, but do you seriously expect any self-respecting Congressman to sign his name in anyone's book when he knew that the Viceroy had refused to see Mr. Gandhi on more than one occasion." I said this with great heat, and from this stage the tide turned. He simply remarked, "Oh well, this is another matter. You have put it on different grounds." And after this the conversation proceeded in a very friendly atmosphere. He became more friendly and I felt more easy.

He eulogised the virtue of Reforms and expressed a sincere desire to give it the best chance in the interests of India.

To this I replied, "I accept all that you say. I have realised the sincerity more than I did in India. I have never concealed my views from the Congressmen, but I have not come here to tell you what I told the Congress friends. I have come to tell you their difficulties. There is an atmosphere in India of mutual distrust and so they find it difficult to put any good interpretation on your motives. Reforms may be in the best interest of India, but only with one condition, and that is with mutual friendship. I accept the safeguards; not that I like them, but I know that we are weak. If we would not be weak you would either refrain from imposing safeguards or we would break them with our strength, but even with our weakness we cannot accept the Reforms if they are the outcome of distrust. Reforms plus mutual trust is a good thing. Minus trust it is a poison." He entirely agreed. He said that I would have to work in India for mutual understanding, or probably with those in charge of India Office. He was neither here nor there. He can only speak in Parliament, but that would not help.

I appreciated his position and parted with his blessings for my mission, and with an assurance that if there is anything concrete where he could help, he would do so. He told me of his days when he was Secretary of State and bore testimony to Lord Willingdon's sincerity. He related how Minto pressed Reforms and how Morley resisted. He again reiterated that Englishmen were full of goodwill. "Let the Reforms be worked with a view to help India, and you will find the seed of growth within it. The Governors and the Governor-General would always be helpful." And then we parted.

*Copy*

July 12, 1935

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I have this morning met Sir Austen Chamberlain and had a talk for nearly an hour. At the beginning we had a little controversy, but at the end, we found ourselves on common ground.

He agreed with me that the Bill, plus mutual understanding, was the best guarantee for its success. He said that this mutual trust would have to be developed in India and that Lord Zetland alone would be able to help. If there was anything concrete where he could help, he would.

He gave me his blessings, but could not see that concrete action he could take. I told him that I did not expect him to take any concrete action. The only thing that I wanted was that he should give me such advice as could help my mission.

I told him that I would do all that is necessary to do in India, and especially in Congress circles, but the difficulty of the Congressmen had to be realized. I told him that there was a great deal of goodwill in England, and I found nothing but agreement with my own mission, but that I was not able as yet to get the next step because everyone was busy with the India Bill. He said, "You come to me if there is anything I can do."

I tried to point out to him the charm of personal contact and the best illustration that I could give was your own; that whilst you have interned 2,500 men without trial, you had created no misunderstanding because we knew that the job was as unpleasant to you as it was to us. but I fear I could not impress him much on this point. He is one of those who believe that what is being done in India is the best.

I have met also Sir Samuel Hoare and am likely to meet Mr. Baldwin in a few days. I also meet Mr. Dawson of the Times. Mr. Dawson seems to be your great friend.

I am just keeping Your Excellency well informed about my work here. The net result so far is that everyone is sympathetic, but I have yet to get something concrete to break the ice in India.

Please continue to help.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

H. E. SIR JOHN ANDERSON

66

July 12, 1935

DEAR LORD DERBY,

Thank you for your letter. You will have full support from Indian interest if you want to confine that Agreement between Burma and India to two years.

I fear, however, that it is now too late, but if you would want me to take any action on behalf of the India mercantile community, I will do my best to help.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

THE EARL OF DERBY  
DERBY HOUSE  
STRATFORD PLACE  
W. 1.

67

WARDHA,  
July 13, 1935

DEAR LAKSHMINIWAS,

I am in receipt of your letter. Herewith a letter for your father. Send it by airmail. I hope all of you are doing well.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu



MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am in receipt of your letter. It makes good reading and I do not find anything amiss. But what I fear most is that when it comes to making conditions the result will be nil. The question of the release of the political prisoners and the detenus, the closing down of the Andamans as a penal settlement and the restoration of land to the civil resisters is quite likely to remain unresolved. I would not like you to raise such issues on your own initiative, but if the man you are interviewing at the moment choose to discuss the matter he may do so. In the present climate little can be hoped for by way of an understanding. They want to indulge in sweet talks, taking it for granted that we would somehow reconcile ourselves to the existing situation. If my fears prove well-founded no understanding is feasible. I cannot say more at the present moment. This, however, does not mean that you should stop trying. You must continue to exert yourself as you have been doing already. The result is in the hands of God alone.

I hope this finds you in good health.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

## 68

### Interview with Mr. Baldwin

(Commenced at 10 a.m. and lasted 20 minutes)

July 18, 1935

He began by remarking that he understood that I was Lord Halifax's friend, and that this was the greatest reform for me.

He asked: "Do you smoke?" I replied: "No." "Would you mind it, if I smoke?" "Certainly not." "It is a very nasty habit, isn't it?" He laughed heartily. I asked him whether Lord Halifax told him of my mission, because in that case I may save his time by not repeating what he already knew. He said, "No, I do not know anything."

I related. Three things essential for the success of Reforms : The realisation by Service that they are servants and not masters or politicians, and therefore should not carry any prejudices against or in favour of any political party. The realisation by Congress that they can advance the country and achieve political freedom through working of the proposed Reforms. Sending best men as Governors and Governor-General, who would work like constitutional monarchs and not meddle with the affairs of the Ministers.

I said, "These are the three essential conditions for the success of the Reforms. None of these conditions exist today in India. The Congress does not realise the benefits that you want them to realise because they judge the Reforms from the atmosphere. The prevailing atmosphere has also poisoned the minds of service. In order to improve the atmosphere, personal contact should be the first step and mutual understanding the next. In the absence of these, the Reforms would be approached with hostility, and so they would break. Everyone has agreed with me about the necessity of creating better atmosphere. Sir Samuel Hoare remarked, 'Probably we would have to wait until the next Viceroy goes,' but this in my opinion, would be too late. New commitments are likely to be made, and so please help me."

He said, "I have taken very deep interest in the whole thing. We are making a great experiment. Democracy has its defects, but it has proved to be the best system so far. Thank God we have not got dictatorship in this country (and then he again had a hearty laugh). A benevolent dictatorship is a very good thing in its own way, but then under such a dictatorship you have to do nothing but sit back. Now this is wrong. Under democracy all of you have to work. This is the best virtue of democracy. Now their experiment in India therefore will succeed if everyone works. It is an experiment in democracy, and so without everyone working, it can never succeed. Now you rightly said about the three conditions essential for the success of Reforms. You can rely on us for sending our best men. Whosoever be the Viceroy in future, he will be the man who will try to work the Reforms in the best interest of India, not the smaller India, but India at large. You know what I mean?



India not only of cities, but of villages. You are a business man, but your interests too depend on the village. The poverty of India is a great problem. We must tackle it and the man whom we send from here will work in co-operation with you for the uplift of the masses. There are things which we cannot do. You alone could do them and we hope that you would. You will have full co-operation from us. In democracy a section could be nasty. In England or in India there are sections who would be nasty. We should not judge people by these sections, but the Congress as such must realise that there is a great scope for them to do good to their country. In the past, Congress had been anti-Government. Anti-Government meant Anti-British, but they should realise that now to be anti-Government would mean being anti-Indian.”

I said, “I realise all that you say, but I want you to think in the Indian atmosphere. I can cite hundreds of instances where we have been treated with distrust. How in this atmosphere anyone in India could believe that things would change for the better after a year? The Reforms may be a splendid thing and I realise the sincerity in England, but don't you think you are trying to serve a beautiful soup in a plate without a bottom? You have to give us a plate of mutual trust and understanding and friendship. Without these, no soup, however good, could be relished.”

He said, “I agree and so I supported Lord Halifax when there was so much agitation against him.” I interrupted and said, “Why didn't you keep him for another term? It was the greatest tragedy that two men who signed the Pact left India immediately after the pact was concluded. He had just begun his work and that ‘pact’ atmosphere does not exist today in India. This spirit has to be restored.” He replied, “Well we could not keep Lord Halifax longer because after five years’ strenuous work his health would not stand it, but I agree about the psychology. If I were a young man then I would have gone to India myself, but...” And at this stage his Secretary interrupted and announced someone else had arrived. The interview thus unfortunately was cut short without Mr. Baldwin having completed his sentence. In my heart I cursed the Secretary. I got up and shook hands and said, “I hope Mr. Baldwin you will help me.” He replied, “I hope I would” and thus we parted.



There could be no two opinions that he is an honest, straightforward and simple man, and he impressed me as a student of politics. He has got a peculiar habit of enjoying a hearty laugh without any special reason, and he does it at an interval of every two minutes. He related how after five years' strenuous work as Prime Minister he had got tired, but gaps in between he said it was a different thing.

## 69

### **Interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury** (Commenced at 3.40 p.m. and lasted 40 minutes)

July 18, 1935

He was very pleased to see me because I was a friend of his 'great friend' Mr. Andrews and also a friend of Mahatma. He said he was always pleased to see Indians. He was full of interest in India. I replied, it is because of this that I felt encouraged to approach him. He said, "Now tell all that you wish to say." I related my usual story, concluding with my usual suggestion. "But is there no personal contact now? Does not the Viceroy meet Indian leaders?" I said, "He may be meeting some leaders, but not the true Indian leaders. You may agree or disagree, but the fact remains that Congress is the most representative body today, and Mr. Gandhi is its virtual dictator. He has retired from the Congress because he thought he could impose his views on it without their being assimilated. His politics are different. They are a part of his religion. He can't make compromises with truth and non-violence under any circumstances. His creed is to change the heart of his opponents by persuasion; if not through argument, through self-suffering. (The Archbishop went on giving nods of approval all this time). Congressmen did not believe fully in this policy. It could be said however, to their credit that though not in thoughts, in action Congressmen conducted the fight with the utmost non-violence. Hindus temperamentally are a non-violent race. (He

said this is a part of your great philosophy). But Mr. Gandhi, not satisfied with the existing conditions, wanted Reforms in the Congress, but thought he would only be imposing his views and so retired. But he is the sole leader even today; a Dictator without the force of arms. He is thus a living symbol of India. Every time he sought the Viceroy's interview, the doors were slammed against him. The gulf is thus widened. Whomsoever the Viceroy meets, it could not be said that he meets India. Mr. Gandhi is India and India is Mr. Gandhi. The Irwin spirit is no longer there."

He said, "I am deeply interested in what you say. I wrote to Lord Willingdon more than once on the necessity of personal touch. I cannot tell you what he replied. But others also confirm what you say. I have no business or military interest in India, but I joined the Joint Parliamentary Committee because I loved, loved India. I could not agree with the majority on certain points, but I sincerely believe that in the circumstances, the Bill is the best constructive proposal. In the first place, it was impossible to get more from the present Parliament; secondly, you could not propose anything better in the transition. From the Rule of Without you have to reach the Rule of Within. You will reach the independence some day and the proposed Reforms is the best road. You should not ignore its good points, and so you should take full advantage of it. But I realise that atmosphere in India is bad, but tell Mr. Gandhi and give him respects and tell him that the Archbishop of Canterbury would not want his time if he did not feel that he was doing good by India. Convey to Mr. Gandhi my assurance of my sympathy and goodwill and tell him that most of the responsible men in England sincerely wanted to help India."

I said, "I would convey all this to Mr. Gandhi, but you have to recognise this, that all this falls flat in India, since the atmosphere is not at all congenial." He said, "Give me some examples. I am told that the men on top are generally good. It is the subordinate official who does not entertain friendly feeling." I said, "I will give you an Indian analogy, which is more homely to me. We probably give sometimes sweets to a dog and only fodder to a cow. But the cow we worship; the dog we throw its food at. The Reform may be a good thing but you are throwing it in our faces. If you want to treat us as partners, you



have to behave like partners. As for concrete example, here is the latest. An earthquake took place at Quetta. The town was sealed 48 hours after the quake. In Bihar, men were dug out alive five days after the quake. The action of the Government in sealing the town so soon was looked upon with the greatest alarm. Petitions were made. The Viceroy was requested to take non-officials into confidence. There were ugly rumours, but we were sternly told, "you could not mind even your own business; we are the best judge." This is the spirit in India. How could we believe in this atmosphere that the Bill would be worked to help us." The Archbishop took a long breath and said, "It was really silly. I will have a talk with my friend Zetland. I agree that the atmosphere should be improved. I hope some time we will be able to establish friendship between the two countries, but tell Mr. Gandhi you have a very old background. A few years more would not matter much. Keep patience. We are sincere and would always help."

I got up. He extended his hand for goodbye. I said, "Your Grace, you are the religious head. Let me pay my respect in my Hindu way." I bowed with folded hands. He put his hand on my head and said, "God bless you." Thus we parted.

## 70

*Copy*

WARDHA,  
July 19, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I enclose copy of my letter to Agatha. You will please read it carefully and make fullest use of it in your talks. Maybe you have already got copies of the correspondence I have sent, in which case you may have already made use of it.

Your letters are as full as they can possibly be. I asked Bapu if he felt like writing anything to you, for being used there. Bapu said: "If I attempted to write anything, it would be artificial. I must feel it within me."



But you may be sure that we greedily devour your letters. There is no doubt that you are making the best out of your visit, and I should be content even with what you have so far achieved.

The *National Call* had a few paragraphs about you in very bad taste and verging on base ingratitude. Bapu is thinking of writing something to Sahni. I shall let you have a copy of it.

Was Parasnathji able to get the books I mentioned? I hope you are keeping quite fit with all the lunches and dinners you are having and giving.

*Yours with love,*  
Mahadev

## 71

### Interview with Lord Linlithgow

(Lunched at 1.15 p.m., returned 2.40 p.m.)

Present—Lord and Lady Linlithgow, two daughters and  
one son)

LONDON,

July 22, 1935

He asked me whether I had seen others. I told him about those that I had seen and also related what Sir Samuel Hoare said. I added that I assured he was to be the next Viceroy. He said, "I will not say anything, you may hold your own views." I replied that I did not seek any confirmation. He said "Now I may sum up the position. We have been talking amongst ourselves and I may admit at once that we are all very much impressed with the strength of your case. We have discussed many ideas, including those supplied by you, but I cannot say that we have been able to pick up any one of them. The future Viceroy or the Secretary of State cannot go to India. Mr. Gandhi could not be invited here unless there was fair prospect of his success. It would be unfair if we invited him, whatever the ground, without giving him some reasonable promise of

success. The present Viceroy cannot break the ice because he complains that he has been boycotted. So this is the position. We have not been able to hit on any idea, but we are not without hope. We may be able to get some imperfect scheme. If we got this we would tell you before you left. If we did not then we would confess our failure. But you can have the satisfaction to feel that even if you have not achieved anything substantial, you have largely succeeded in impressing us with your views. We fully realise that if the Reforms are to work effectively there must be an agreement about the future between the right, left and centre. I replied, "I quite appreciate the position, if I have been able to impress upon you the necessity of arriving at a mutual agreement, this in itself is a satisfaction to me. But I must have something concrete to work upon. To wait until April when the next Viceroy goes and do nothing until then is a thing that does not appeal to me. As regards not signing the names I must say that the game was started by Lord Willingdon himself. It is only a boomrang. He slammed doors half a dozen times in the face of Gandhiji, and so the Congressmen were left with no choice. But there were also other reasons for their not signing the names. They did not want the rank and file to hobnob with the official society. Mr. Desai was always ready to wait on the Viceroy. The Congressmen never signed their names in the time of Lord Reading and started only during the term of Lord Halifax." He said, "I want to make it clear that I am not taking sides. The Congress may or may not be right. I personally am trained in a business atmosphere and so it makes no difference to me whether they sign their names or not in my book, but here is a position which has to be faced." I said, "I quite see, but I might give you another idea. Suppose the present Viceroy invited a political conference including the Governors of the provinces and important political leaders and also Gandhiji, then further developments took place in order to arrive at an understanding." He said, "Yes, that is a good idea, and we consider it, but I am not without hope." I said, "Suppose some idea occurs to you after I have left England, how shall I know it and work upon it?" He replied, "Leave it to me." "How much longer should I stay in England?" "You have to be guided by your own judgment, but I hope you are staying on for August,"



I said, "I shall stay on as long as I am wanted but I do not want to idle away my time." Then we moved to the luncheon table and talked about conditions in India. I told him about Bapu's work in Wardha; the hostility and indifference of the villagers in the beginning, leading towards a friendly attitude in the end and how he had to work with all these difficulties from the villagers and suspicion from the Government.

Then I told him what I had started in Pilani. He was interested in all this work and showed great sympathy. He told me that sheep breeding would not succeed but Holstein Bulls were the best breed for cross purpose. He wanted me to read his own report. Then we discussed the days of Gandhi-Irwin pact, and how Bapu in the beginning thought Lord Irwin was an insincere man and came to realise at the first meeting that he was a most sincere man and how they became the closest friends. He took a keen interest in all these stories.

I told him about the difficulties of milk transportation and consequent extinction of the best cow breed. He agreed and said we would have to make arrangements for cold storage car. We then discussed the mill industry. He being a thread manufacturer we discussed the kind of electric drive that was best. He preferred individual underground motor drive. He told me that Japanese machines preferred individual underground motor drive. He told me that Japanese machines were not bad.

We then discussed the educational problem in India. He enquired about my views and I said that I was in favour of extensive primary and middle education, but I was not in favour of unrestricted higher education. He said that Sudan regulated the supply of its graduates so as not to cause a glut but he did not know how to do it in India. I said, "If I were an Indian minister I would probably like to tax the higher education for the benefit of the primary and middle education." He agreed, but said, "Only an Indian minister could do it without being misunderstood." He asked me how the motor transport was affecting village life. I said, "I do not see any good change. More cinemas, better cloth and more drink are coming into prominence, but no rise in income." He sympathized with my views.

He asked about Bapu; how old he was and how was his health. I told him that I had never seen a healthier man in my



life. "He works hard, sleeps less and eats less and yet is healthy and most cheerful."

I could see that he was great friend of Lord Halifax. When I left he again summed up the position and said that he would let me know what they could do.

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*Copy*

WAR OFFICE,  
WHITE HALL,  
S. W. 1.  
July 22, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Thank you very much for your letter.

I am very glad that Mr. Baldwin was able to see you and that you had such an encouraging and helpful interview with him.

I continue to turn over my mind, the various matters we discussed, but I have not yet found an answer that satisfies me. I think it might help if we had another talk; provided that no Cabinet Committee is summoned in the mean time for Monday next, the 29th July. I could see you at 12.15 if that date and time would suit you.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Halifax

In any case, I should be glad to see you again before I leave London.

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.

73

*Copy*

July 22, 1935

DEAR LORD HALIFAX,

Before I return to India, I should like to have a final interview with your Lordship and should be obliged if you would give me some time when I can come and have another chat.

I lunched with Lord Linlithgow today and felt happy to understand that the matter is receiving consideration.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

LORD HALIFAX  
88 EATON SQUARE  
S. W. 1

74

*Copy*

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
CALCUTTA,  
July 22, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Thank you very much indeed for your two most interesting letters. I am glad that you have been able to make so many valuable contacts. I think the best advice that I can give, is to keep in the closest touch with Sir Findlater Stewart and to place full reliance on his judgment. He knows India's problems well, is full of goodwill and is very sagacious.

*Yours sincerely,*  
John Anderson

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
LONDON

75

*Copy*

July 23, 1935

DEAR LORD DERBY,

Thanks for your letter. Now that you are not in Manchester, I do not know whether I shall go at all. If you were there, I should have been attracted, but in any case, I will let you know if I decide to go.

I am dining with Mr. Oliver Stanley tomorrow evening, when I shall have the pleasure of renewing his acquaintance.

Meanwhile, I hope that you will take full advantage of your treatment at the health centre.

I may be leaving for India some time about the middle of next month and hope that some day I shall have the privilege of meeting you again in my own country.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

THE EARL OF DERBY

76

**Notes of an Informal Discussion between Mr. G.D. Birla  
and the Following Members of the Indian Conciliation Group**

Mr. Carl Heath, Mr. Alexander Wilson, Mr. F. Pratt,  
Mr. Polak, Rev. W. Paton, Dr. Harold Mann,  
Mrs. Lankester, Mr. Eric Hayman, Rev. R.M. Gray  
and Miss Agatha Harrison.

July 24, 1935

The object of this discussion was to talk over with Mr. Birla possible "next steps" that could be taken by a group like ours in connection with the atmosphere in India between the Government and national leaders—particularly Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Birla and Mr. Heath lunched together first, the other members joining them later. Mr. Birla briefly explained the tense situation. He testified to the genuine goodwill he met here



in his meeting with important individuals—the hopeless attitude of the Viceroy towards Mr. Gandhi and his repeated refusals to meet friendly overtures that had been made by Mr. Gandhi. To wait until the new Viceroy was appointed was in Mr. Birla's opinion a mistake. The situation would harden, and the fact that Congress would meet in March and decide their future policy towards the new constitution—made it imperative that something was done immediately to grapple with the situation. The urgent thing to be done was to try to restore the Irwin-Gandhi atmosphere. Personal contact and a pact. For if things remained as they were, serious trouble was ahead; there would be no chance of any Reform working. An alternative would be to tackle the Untouchable atmosphere and see if co-operation would be secured by making an agreement for the future. Some approach must be made to Mr. Gandhi and other responsible Congress leaders. Mr. Heath pointed out that this was pre-eminently the work, the Indian Conciliation Group sought to do. Discussion followed from which the following points emerged :

(1) Is Mr. Spender's suggestion practical to organize parliamentary groups here and in India, to keep them closely in touch, persuade their members to visit each other's country, and give mutual help?

(2) The need for responsible Indian leaders visiting this country. Mr. Birla explained Gandhiji's point in this respect, but he said that he felt the coming of man like Mr. Desai would be useful.

(3) The possibility of Mr. Gandhi visiting this country was discussed. Mr. Birla suggested that this did not seem immediately advisable unless he came with the tacit of the India Office.

(4) The possibility of a few M.P.s going to India during the recess in order to demonstrate the goodwill of this country, and to learn at first hand the situation as outlined by Mr. Birla. The names of Lord Lothian, Mr. Foot and Mr. Morgan Jones were mentioned; it would be necessary also for a Conservative to go. It was suggested too, that some representatives from the Christian and Peace forces should go.

(5) The need for an approach to be made to Lord Zetland.<sup>1</sup>

It was finally decided to seek Lord Halifax's advice—to discuss with him the above suggestions before taking any step. Mr. Heath said he would at once try and secure an interview with him.

<sup>1</sup> The note was prepared by the Indian Conciliation Group—G.D.B.

## 77

*Copy*

July 25, 1935

DEAR MR. DAWSON,

I wonder when we are likely to meet again. Do you think you might help the Indian debate in the House of Commons which takes place, I think, on Tuesday next, by putting something again about the necessity of establishing personal contact and an agreement about the working of the reforms. Things seem to be pretty bad in India and since I left, Quetta and Lahore and the incident at Jubbulpore must have caused further tension. The Lahore incident is purely and simply a communal affair but is the outcome of the belief of the Mohammedans that they have got the trump card with them. The incident at Jubbulpore is rather a serious affair, but this again is the outcome of the present psychology which does not make the Service and military feel that they have to serve. The only remedy for improving the psychology in each respective sphere is an agreement which makes everyone feel that he has to behave as a partner.<sup>1</sup>

I hope you are well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

<sup>1</sup> The same thing was conveyed separately to each of Mssrs J.A. Spender; Kingsley Martin, Editor, *New Statesman*; Sir Walter Layton, Knight; Boweri St., E.C. and Sir James Bone, *Manchester Guardian*.—G.D.B.

78

*Copy*

July 26, 1935

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

As you may be going out of town and I am going back to India shortly, I wonder whether I could meet you again. I have met everyone and understand that I have created a profound impression about the strength of my case. But, it has not led me to any concrete result so far. There are obvious difficulties of which I was not aware, but we have either to surmount them or at any rate neutralise their evil effects until next April. And I should like to take some concrete suggestion with me when I leave this country so that I may be able to prepare the ground for the next step.

I have been hearing from friends of what you have been doing and I am grateful to you for your kindly interest.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
SEYMOUR HOUSE  
17 WATERLOO PLACE  
S. W. 1

79

**Interview with Lord Halifax**

(Interview Commenced at 12.15 and lasted half an hour)

July 29, 1935

He asked whether I had to say anything further. I replied, nothing except what I had heard from Lord Linlithgow and I related the whole story. After relating the gist of my conversation with Lord Linlithgow I said that I did not know whether the matter was put to Delhi. Probably I said I could not be



taken into confidence. But I should like to know if anything was possible to be done just now; whether Lord Linlithgow had any scheme which he wants to put into operation after he goes to India. Lord Halifax said that he knew as much as I knew and then he sank into a deep reverie. At times he kept quiet for minutes and minutes watching the calling and then he suddenly said, "What is the kind of atmosphere you are complaining against? Are they not sympathetic in India towards political aspirations?" I said, "I do not know much about the sympathy but I know about distrust. Service is full of distrust, verging on the point of hatred, and so they turned down every popular proposal. Even if on merit it is sound they think that the prestige would suffer if anything was accepted which came from the popular side." I told him my distinct impression about the two atmospheres, one prevailing in London and the other in India and I said, "I have come to the conclusion that you cannot change the atmosphere in India unless you took up a very strong attitude from this end." He said that this atmosphere in the present stage to some extent was inevitable. Indians wanted much greater advance, Britishers were extending their hands but cautiously. Indians wanted to snatch more. In this struggle the popular element wanted to take credit for something which by comparison might mean discredit for the Government and Viceroy. This led to recrimination, distrust and other clashes. He said, "Even in my time I had to think at times of prestige." I replied, "This is exactly what I want to break. You may have thought of your prestige but you also made efforts to bring about the atmosphere of mutual trust. You did not give away much in Gandhi-Irwin pact. But you were successful because you trusted and got reciprocation, you gave the full dose of repression but at the same time you sent Sapru and Jayakar to Gandhiji for negotiations and with the trust you got a better atmosphere at the time you left India. This is all now reversed." In order to emphasise my point I told him how Gandhiji before he met him for the famous pact, went with a feeling not very friendly towards him and returned after the first interview with quite a changed feeling. He agreed but said that the machinery of the Government cannot create a suitable atmosphere. "It is only personalities that can do it and as you know we have to wait until we get the right personalities." "If Lord

Linlithgow wants, I am sure," he said, "he would not be deterred by minor considerations, he would of course weigh things for himself. I do not know what scheme he has got at all but you can rely upon him to do the right thing." He asked my impression about Lord Linlithgow. I said that he appeared to be the right President, very courteous, very impartial, very sympathetic, wanted always to do the right thing, but I said maybe his impartiality is a defect as he may be lacking in imagination or warmth. Lord Halifax said, "He is a Scotchman and therefore he does not show it but he is full of imagination and warmth." I said, "Do you think he would be able to resist the atmosphere surrounding him?" He said, "Oh yes, you can be sure of that." I said, "It would be better if he took his own secretary." He said, "Do you like Melville?" I said, "I do not know much of him but perhaps a man like Sir Findlater Stewart would be better." He agreed and then said, "Now that it is quite clear that no important step could be taken before the new Viceroy goes, cannot you persuade Mr. Gandhi to use his influence with the Congress in a manner not to allow them to make any hasty judgments until the new Viceroy goes?" He again said, "I know the task is a difficult one. If I were an Indian and a Congressman, while maintaining my position with the rank and file and keeping up the Nationalist sentiment, I would not burn my boats so as to leave me with no alternative." I said that this was not the way of Bapu's thinking. He did not care what the rank and file thought or what the Government thought. He would always take what he thought was the right step. His belief is that the liberty has to come from within and not from without and so he would continue to organise the nationalist forces in India by doing constructive work. But I thought Bapu would never be in favour of adopting any wrecking tactics. Lord Halifax said, "Yes I know he has not even read the Bill nor would he ever do so. When I wanted him to discuss the constitutional question, he just brushed them aside. He is more after the atmosphere, but cannot you persuade the other political leaders or cannot Mr. Gandhi persuade the other political leaders not to be hasty in their decision about the reforms until they have seen the new Viceroy?" I said, "I will tell all these things to Bapu." He asked, "Who are the next most important men to Mr. Gandhi?" I said, "Mr. Patel and Pandit



Nehru.” He asked, “The brother of the President?” I said, “Yes.” “What sort of man is he?” “Very capable, very sound and shrewd. He can be as mischievous as his brother if he wants to be, but he never wants to be.” He laughed. “What about Nehru? Do you know him?” I said, “Very well. I do not think he is as clever as Mr. Patel. At times he is childish. He would never be able to appeal to the older element, but would always appeal to the youngsters.” “Is he not too much on the left wing?” I said, “I do not think so, although he talks a lot, he himself is being abused by the Indian Communists.” “What about Dr. Ansari?” I said, “He is just a good man and nothing more. His position is entirely due to the Hindus and so will never command any great influence in the Congress circles.” He said, “In any case you should do your best so that no new commitments may be made by the Congress. You should not go back with the impression that you have achieved nothing. You have done a good deal of very valuable work. I am glad that you met Mr. Baldwin. You have prepared very good ground; in this world concrete works are never to be realized immediately. Concrete comes out of abstract and you do not know when the things may resolve themselves into something concrete. It always takes time. But ultimately it comes into being.” Then he said, “Would it be possible to persuade Congressmen to sign their names in Willingdon’s book?” I said, “Impossible. It may be possible in the time of Lord Linlithgow, but I cannot say.” He said, “In any case try. Give my love to Mr. Gandhi. He need not be told that I am doing my best to help him because he knows it. There are a number of hitches which we have to cope with, but when there is faith in the cause one should continue to work.”

## 80

### Notes

July 29, 1935

Mr. Post, religious journalist, who provides news to the Church Papers, came to lunch and had a long talk. He thought



it was a pity that the atmosphere was so bad and he enquired whether the Church people could do anything. I said, "Of course you can. You may carry propaganda in your Press and you can ask the Archbishop of Canterbury to lead a movement for goodwill on both sides bringing pressure on the Government of India to behave like partners." He said that he would like me to meet more Church journalists, but the holidays being ahead, this does not seem to be very feasible. He will write in the religious Press about the matters discussed between us.

\*                      \*                      \*

The representative of the *Evening Standard* came to talk. He has not put anything in the Press.

\*                      \*                      \*

Mr. Bone of *Manchester Evening News* and Mr. Speeder to whom I had written to carry on propaganda in favour of establishing a better atmosphere in India have replied saying that they will write. I had also written to Mr. Dawson, Sir Walter Leyton, and Kingsley Martin. They have not yet replied, but they will.

## 81

**Wilson Harrison—Editor, "Spectator"**

July 29, 1935

I told my usual story and as usual with every one he agreed. He asked me what I thought of the speech of Lord Zetland. I said that they were now getting sickening. There was no reality about the things. "When fine speeches are delivered in England with the worst atmosphere in India they should be hypocritical. What we want is no more speeches but action."

We then discussed Halifax vis-a-vis Willingdon. It appears

from what is said that no one makes this comparison because everybody admits that Willingdon is not a patch on Halifax. Nobody thinks much about his intellect and work. Wilson Harrison then put me various questions about India to acquaint himself with the situation and promised that he would write about the things.

We discussed the problem of Indian students. I fear that we will have to do something in India to solve the problem. Everybody tells me here that we are not getting the value of the money. I told him about the problem of the Indian laskars in the East-end. About three-hundred Indian laskars are settled down in the East-end and have English wives and children which they cannot maintain. I told him how I had offered to take fifty children to India, but the parents would not part with them.

## 82

### Notes

July 29, 1935

Lord Lothian writes today asking me to have tea with him tomorrow. Here is a significant paragraph :

“There are clearly going to be difficulties in the way of carrying out the kind of proposals which you originally had in view. On the other hand your visit here is undoubtedly awakening people to the very real problem which I do not think they had fully understood before and will, I think, bear fruit in other ways. I heard a great deal of appreciation expressed about your initiative.”

This is heartening so far as it goes.

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Lunched with the Directors of Lloyds Bank.

I told them how British Merchants were losing ground and

how Continental machinery manufacturers had shown great improvements. I told them that I sincerely thought that after ten years India would take to exporting cloth to Lancashire. They took it all very seriously and were very much upset. They are going to talk between themselves.

## 83

July 30, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEV,

Thanks for your letter. It was very heartening thing to hear from you that you at least feel that I am making the best out of my visits. No concrete result is to be seen as yet and at times this disappoints me. But you are quite correct when you say, "I should be content even with what you have so far achieved." Yesterday Lord Halifax said the same thing in exactly the same words. He says that a concrete shape comes out of abstract and that I have prepared very good ground for things which will resolve into something concrete.

I have finished almost all my important visits. Mr. Churchill has invited me to lunch with him, but has not yet fixed the day, Mr. Lloyd George is very busy and will see me if he can find time but I am chiefly waiting here for the final interview with Lord Zetland and Sir Findlater Stewart. Most of those whom I have met asked me to see them again, but I am deliberately avoiding the second visits because I may unnecessarily bore them and besides the chief men are at the India Office. Sir Findlater Stewart has not seen me for a long time. I have been reminding him and his secretary tells me every now and then on the telephone that Sir Findlater Stewart and Lord Zetland are thinking of seeing me as soon as possible. It is quite possible that something is going on between India and Whitehall and maybe they are waiting for some final decision or maybe they are genuinely busy. In any case I know they have not forgotten and they know I am waiting for them. As soon as I finish with



them I wish to leave and after passing a few weeks on the Continent I am thinking of sailing for India about the middle of September.

Today I received a letter from the Governor of Bengal acknowledging receipt of my two letters and he gives me very sound advice when he says, "The best advice that I can give you is to keep in the closest touch with Sir Findlater Stewart and to place full reliance on his judgment. He knows Indian problems well, is full of goodwill and is very sagacious." Well, I am doing this already but I do not know whether I am keeping myself in the closest touch. It depends more upon him than upon me.

One thing I can tell you from what I have gathered here is that Bapu is being understood now in a better spirit and I have done my best to explain him.

I am making good use of Rajendraprasad's correspondence but except exposing the follies of the Government of India, I do not think I am going to achieve much in this respect. The more I have watched things, the more I have come to the conclusion that there are two distinct atmospheres, one in London, the creation of the politicians and statesmen, the other in India, the creation of the Viceroy and officials. As you might have seen Masani's passport is to be renewed in spite of the instructions of the Government of India. This shows how the London atmosphere is working in the opposite direction, but the London atmosphere could only help the actions which are to be taken in London. Those which are to be taken in India remain unaffected, and Lord Halifax agreed with me about my analysis. How to improve the atmosphere in India is a problem and it depends entirely upon personalities. But we have to work with patience.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

This was written on the 30th. After that I met Zetland. Details are enclosed. From this it will be clear where the difficulty lies. Findlater is coming for dinner tomorrow and I have been invited by Churchill to lunch the day after tomorrow.

I have been favourably impressed here. We can control the situation with the help of people here. That is my feeling.

The people here are neither blind nor dumb. Even the Tory marches with times. The friendship with Russia and burial of the Warsaw treaty are examples. All this will be repeated in the case of India. Time will make everything possible, on the other hand the officialdom behaves to be the Benares Pandits who lag behind the times. The people here feel helpless to some extent. But we can help them as well. Bapu has to drive his cart while keeping all this in view.

Ghanshyamdas

## 84

*Copy*

July 30, 1935

DEAR SIR FINDLATER,

I am enclosing herewith copies of the correspondence which took place between Mr. Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President and the Government of India with reference to the Quetta affairs. I leave it to you to draw your own conclusions.

Without going into the details of the case, I can say at least this. Where there is mutual distrust coupled with lack of personal contact such results become inevitable. Rajendra Babu himself could not have been unaffected by all the rumours that were prevailing about the Quetta affairs and so was quite right in bringing the matter to the notice of the Government. On the other hand, the latter must have felt chagrin at being told all these ugly rumours when they sincerely believed in their minds that they had done their best. But a student of human psychology would have understood that the way to deal with such rumours is not the way pursued by the Government in their reply. I, therefore, always look upon the creation of mutual trust as the only solution for all these troubles.

I am glad that Masani's passport has been renewed, but I fear that this episode has brought him into prominence out of all proportion. This again shows the difference between the two

atmospheres, the one in London and the other in India. The one in India did a thing which had to be undone in London.

I am doing nothing just now, having completed my round of visits.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G.D. Birla

SIR FINDLATER STEWART

85

*Copy*

SAYMOUR HOUSE,  
17 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.1,  
July 31, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I have delayed answering your letter until the final discussion at the India Office this afternoon. I understand that Lord Zetland is going to see you in the next day or two and he will tell you his conclusion.

There are clearly going to be difficulties in the way of carrying out the kind of proposals which you originally had in view. On the other hand your visit here has undoubtedly awakened people to the very real problem which I don't think they had fully understood before and will, I think, bear fruit in other ways. I heard a great deal of appreciation expressed about your initiative.

As regards myself, I am going out of town on Friday evening for a holiday. I shall be delighted if you will look in and have a cup of tea either in my office, the above address or in my flat, 88 St. James's Street, at 5 o'clock that afternoon as I should much value a further talk with you before you return to India.

*Yours sincerely,*  
P.P. Lothian,  
P.M.C.

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
W 1



**Interview with Lord Zetland**  
(Time : 5 p.m.—lasted 45 minutes)

August 1, 1935

The appointment was for 4 o'clock but he was delayed in the House of Lords and sent a message of apology through the telephone and asked me to wait. I did. He came at 5 o'clock and profusely apologised for the delay. At the start he rubbed his hands, his usual habit which he never forgets when he talks. Then he took a great sigh of relief about the fact that the Bill was passed and that on the next day it would be on the Statute Book. I said that he should not be relieved as the work, if anything, had just begun. He agreed and then asked me whom I had met since I met him last. I gave him the long list. He asked me if I was satisfied with my visit. I said, "Yes, so far as the visits go they have been quite satisfactory. Everyone agrees with me and also sympathises and yet I must admit that I have got nothing concrete to take back to India and so cannot see the light." He said, "We have been talking between ourselves, Halifax, Lothian, Linlithgow and myself and we are all puzzled at the situation. I wrote to the Viceroy telling him about the necessity of personal contact and the creation of a better atmosphere, but the Viceroy takes up the attitude that he cannot proceed because he has been socially boycotted. He feels that it was he who was responsible for the entry of the Congressmen in the Assembly. He therefore naturally expected co-operation and help from them but not only have they not signed their names but also they refuse to attend any function where he goes. He says that he being a representative of the King cannot, in these circumstances, establish personal touch." I said, "Let me correct the statement of Lord Willingdon. It is not a fact that they refuse to attend function where the Viceroy goes. Of course they have not signed their names, but I explained to the Viceroy that no discourtesy was meant. Mr. Desai was quite prepared to wait but the Viceroy himself told me that he would not see Desai unless he signed his name. Now, as regards signing the names, there are naturally difficulties. Lord Willingdon had boycotted Mr. Gandhi and there is a strong resent-

ment among the Congressmen on that score. But the chief reason for their not signing their names is that they do not like their men to hobnob with officials. There is such a ban in Persia, where the officials are not allowed to mix with the Britishers freely, only the higher men can meet socially. The Congress members bear no feeling of discourtesy but in their self-defence they want to keep the rank and file away from the officials. But I am sorry that the Viceroy should have exaggerated this very minor thing. Mr. Gandhi did not sign his name in the King's book and yet he was invited to Buckingham Palace." Lord Zetland replies, "Whatever be the reasons the fact has to be faced that Lord Willingdon is not favourably inclined towards your proposal and therefore we have to wait for the next gesture until the new Viceroy goes." I said, "I quite realise the difficulties but we have to keep two things in mind. Something has to be done before the new Viceroy goes and you have to make a mental plan of your next step to improve the situation after the next Viceroy goes." He agreed and said, "Until the new Viceroy goes you have to work with your friends and tell them of the impression that you have gathered. How can we assure you that we are out to help you? You should assure Mr. Gandhi that Baldwin, Hoare, Halifax, Linlithgow, Lothian and myself are all sincere men and we want to see the Reforms worked in the best interests of India. We would give you full facilities to make the best of the Reforms in favour of your own country. The safeguards are there but they will not be used. It will be your own Government. Even the speeches of Churchill although unsympathetic, they all say that it has been a surrender. We moderate people think that you will be able to wield a great power and advance your country towards your goal. You must assure Mr. Gandhi on this point and tell them not to take any hostile attitude until the next Viceroy goes." I said, "I will tell them all these things, but this will not be enough. After all some gesture will have to be made to get a better understanding and then only would the Bill work. The atmosphere in London is all right, but there is another atmosphere in India which will have to be improved. It could not be exported from England, it has to be created in India and unless you do this there is no hope of the Reforms." He said, "You can rely upon this, we will do our best. Just now we cannot move but you should not



forget that the Reforms will essentially work in the provinces and in the provinces the Congressmen will come in touch with the Governors. Why should there be any clash? Take the case of Sir John Anderson; he is a good man. Take the case of Emerson, he is a friend of Mr. Gandhi. Take the case of Lord Brabourne; he is very sympathetic." I said, "Yes, but Sir John Anderson proved his helplessness because of the attitude at Delhi and so could not see Mr. Gandhi after giving him an appointment." He said, "Yes, I see the point." I said, "I would like to talk to Lord Brabourne." He said that he would give me a letter of introduction. I said that I felt that in his own interests Lord Willingdon should change the policy because it would not be to his credit if it had to be changed by his successor. He replied, "This is not a thing for me to say." Then he asked me whether I had seen Lord Derby. I said, "Why do you put this question?" He told me about Lord Derby's difficulties from Manchester. I explained how the Modi pact was wrong. No Indian mills on earth could ever support Manchester cloth. It was not in the interests of the Indian mills what Modi did, there must be some reasons which Modi could not explain. I said, "The best course for Manchester was to develop friendship with Indian politicians. Indian politicians might sacrifice Indian mill owners for political benefits. They would want Manchester's wishes and Manchester must know that left to ourselves in the course of time we may be able to export cloth to Lancashire." He said that Lancashire people were not with the time.

Then at the time of my departure he wished me goodluck and said, "If there is anything you should want to write from India, do so and take back the assurance that we are all out to help." I said, "I quite realise this, but take note not to make any gesture without discussing the next step with Congress leaders, otherwise your next step may be wrong step without doing any good to anyone." He agreed.

He was very interested in the fact that I was lunching with Mr. Churchill.

He said he would not like to put any pressure on the Viceroy as it would not help. The action must be spontaneous.



87

**Tea with Lord Lothian**

(Time : 5 p.m.)

August 2, 1935

Asked me for the result of my conversation with Lord Zetland. He knew what Lord Zetland was going to tell me because he, Lord Halifax, Lord Linlithgow and Lord Zetland are all working in the closest touch and have been discussing my suggestions. I told him the gist of my conversation. He said that I had set them at thinking but the difficulties were there and so we have to wait until the next Viceroy goes. I said, "But even for the next Viceroy they must think out some plan. Have you got anything in mind, and what am I to do until then?" He eulogized at great length the virtues of Reforms. "We should prepare", he said, "a plan for the next election, capture all the seats and then have our own Government. Election pledges may not be wild, at the same time the nationalist sentiment must be kept up and under the new Government, Congress and representatives of Great Britain would come more and more in touch. The whole atmosphere would be changed and we would then realise the virtues of the Reforms. Governors would never interfere." I said, "This is not the remedy for improving the atmosphere and the Reforms, with the best will in the world, would not work unless the service changed their mental attitude and became servants and not masters." He asked whether they had not changed during the last ten years. I said, "Yes, but yet much behind the times." "Everywhere it is so," he said, "times move faster than people, but I cannot conceive how they would not change. Forty-three per cent of the service is now Indian, in course of time they will get good positions and the percentage also will increase, and so the whole mentality would be changed." I said, "An agreement between the two countries alone can make this psychological change on the service. The service could then realize our prestige and behave like servants." He agreed and said, "The next Viceroy will see everyone including Mr. Gandhi and thus personal touch will be established and also some agreement." I said, "Two or three points would arise before any agreement is concluded. Release of political priso-

ners, return of land and some scheme for the release of detenus. They may have to be embodied in some declaration to be made from this side. A declaration drafted in consultation with popular element. This would change the atmosphere and also the psychology all round.” He asked me, “What view did the Governor of Bengal take?” I told him the gist of my conversation with Sir John Anderson; he was very strong about point. He would not accept any wholesale release but would be quite prepared to discuss ways and means. Lord Lothian replied that the authorities here would very much go by what the Governor of Bengal said. He agreed that instead of waiting until the new Government gets into power some agreement must be concluded about the terrorists immediately. I told him that I was glad to see Sarat released and that they should do something also for Subhas. “He would not be unmanageable—without the two brothers, Gandhiji would not be able to solve the problem of the Bengal terrorists. Both the brothers are not difficult although they are well determined and very influential.” He said, “How is it that Bengal has so deteriorated, in old days it led India?” “Gladstone was good for the end days but would be useless today.”

He had read Subhas Bose’s book and said it was not bad. Coming to the point he said, “Give me a note of all that you have said and I will have a talk with Lord Linlithgow.” He asked me whether I had spoken to Lord Linlithgow on this point. I said, “No, I have not, I talked in general terms. I thought the time was not ripe to say anything concrete.” He said that he would take up the things. I asked whether it was definitely decided that Lord Linlithgow would go to India. He said, “It looks so, he is a very good man only he has not the charms of Willingdon, he is somewhat awkward in manner.” I said, “This does not matter, but will he be able to make his own decision?” “Yes”, he said. I suggested that he should take his own private secretary, a man like Findlater Stewart. Then I asked whether I should again try at Delhi. “By all means,” he said. “Lord Willingdon is making a great mistake in not meeting Mr. Gandhi. We may not agree with Gandhi but he is really a big man, a world force and international figure. Probably he may not be a practical man, but what he says is fully utilized by his followers, who do the things in a somewhat different



form but the inspiration always comes from Gandhi. If you will try again you may succeed. He may feel that before he left India he should go with a feeling of reconciliation.” He asked me where I was going before sailing to India. I said, “I do not know.” He said, “Come to Scotland and meet me.” I asked him whether he was thinking of going to India next year and he said he might.

88

August 3, 1935

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

Your letter is very heartening and I can assure your Lordship that I am not going back with any disappointment. In fact I feel that I am taking with me your goodwill and the goodwill of those other friends who count, and that, as you yourself have expressed—in fullness of time this goodwill must bear good fruit.

There are one or two more points which I wish to submit to you. The new Viceroy will have to work hard to create the atmosphere and he may require someone to help him who could not take with him his own private secretary, as Lord Willingdon did.

After the new Viceroy has established personal contact, some points are bound to crop up for consideration, and I am putting them forward so that your Lordship may work your mind for the solution:

(1) Release of non-violent political prisoners. (There are not many but there are some like Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Pandit Nehru. The latter probably will be released very soon).

(2) Return of the confiscated land. This point was conceded in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact, but with the breakdown of the pact everything receded into the background. Congress would find it difficult to enjoy offices while leaving their co-workers in the lurch.



(3) The question of terrorism would have to be solved. Some scheme would have to be found to get rid of the terrorism effectively. On this point the Congress and Government are on common ground, but their methods are not common. The Congress want to kill terrorism more by conciliation than by punishment. While the Congress should not exclude punishment from their *modus operandi*, the Government, in my opinion, should not exclude the method of reconciliation. I am visualising in my mind the creation of a common ground for the Government and the opposition and thereby meeting the terrorism effectively. The release of Mr. S. C. Bose is a step in the right direction, and I think his brother Mr. Subhas Bose too, could be handled properly. It would not be beyond the ingenuity of Sir John Anderson to find a formula.

I am just writing all these things for your consideration, because some day you will have to give serious attention to these matters and you may like to think ahead.

Thanking you for the courtesy and your good wishes.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

## 89

August 3, 1935

DEAR LORD ZETLAND,

Thanks for your letter of introduction and your blessings. Although I am not taking anything concrete back to India with me, the sympathy and goodwill that I am taking will, I am sure, resolve into something concrete in the course of time.

I had a similar message of goodwill from Lord Linlithgow to whom I have replied today, copy of which I am enclosing herewith because there are some points in it which are likely to come in for consideration some day.

I will make good use of the letter of introduction which you have kindly given to me for Lord Brabourne.

Again thanking your Lordship for the courtesy shown to me and for the encouragement and blessings,

*I am,  
Yours sincerely,  
G. D. Birla*

90

WARDHA,  
August 4, 1935

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am in receipt of your letter. Your previous letters also had reached here. There was no suggestion whatever in my letter that there is something wrong in your method of approach. As far as I can recall, what I wrote was that though you have been proceeding on the right lines, my only fear is that when it comes to interpreting that word 'agreement' difficulties are likely to arise. But I am quite at ease. What will be, will be. Let us continue to do our duty fearlessly. As soon as you begin to feel that there is nothing more left for you to do there, you must come back. I would not relish the idea of your sitting idle there, doing nothing. If, however, you deem it proper to prolong your sojourn for the sake of your health, that would, of course, be different.

I do hope you are being duly posted with the Harijan Sangh activities.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

91

WARDHA,  
August 4, 1935

CHI. LAKSHMINIWAS,

I am in receipt of your letter. The earlier letter had also arrived. I am enclosing a letter for your father, but if he has already left, please inform me by wire.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

92

**Sir Findlater Stewart Came to Dine at 8 p.m. and Stayed  
until 10.30 p.m.**

August 7, 1935

The discussion centred chiefly round the next step. It is no use, keep writing verbatim. It would be a very long report. These are his views in a nut-shell. Personal meeting would be the first step, but it should not be made with any flourish of trumpets. It should not be given any extraordinary colour. Circumstances in the past made the meeting between Mr. Gandhi and the Viceroy appear to be something extraordinarily unusual. This must be avoided. Secondly there should be no such thing as a breakdown. The meeting should be undertaken with a view to finding a measure of agreement and not disagreement. The agreement should be emphasized more than the disagreement. The Government is not a one-man-show, it is a complicated machinery. When decisions are taken they are sometimes taken without conviction, but under compulsion of circumstances. This must be realised by Mr. Gandhi. If his advice is not accepted it does not mean that there is not desire to accept it, but that the circumstances would not allow the acceptance. So many contradictory views have to be reconciled when the Government makes a decision. Sometimes it is the frontier men and sometimes it is the provincial Governor. This



creates all complications. Mr. Gandhi should accept the following premises:

(1) That the new Viceroy is an honest man and that he wants to do right by India.

(2) That the Government of India is not infallible, but is not made of stupid fools. On the other hand the Government should recognise that Mr. Gandhi is a great force, and has honesty of purpose and so should try to meet him as far as possible. If there is this mutual appreciation both sides may differ and on account of the circumstances may not be able to find complete agreement, but this should not cause a rupture. Perhaps the point of disagreement may have to be solved by stages and by instalments we may get a complete solution. The spirit of mutual trust should be the main guiding factor. This would require patience on both sides. We discussed at very great length the questions of return of land, release of political prisoners and ultimate release of detenus. He pointed out the cons while I put forward the pros. It was a friendly discussion. He was non-committal, but agreed that these points are bound to come up for discussion and has promised to exercise his mind. He wishes me good luck and success. He was under the impression that Rajendra Babu had published the correspondence. I corrected him. He said all the same it was a very nasty letter. The language was rather strong. He had nothing but regard for Rajendra Babu.

Carl Heath says he will meet Zetland. He said Lord Halifax did not like Mr. Gandhi being invited to London because he would not be understood by the average Englishman. He said it is like sending chrysanthemum to North Pole. When I met the head of Reuters I told him that what he was sending to England was not a faithful representation of the Indian views. He asked my advice and assured me that he had entire sympathy for educating the British public opinion about the Indian views. I said he should send Mr. Maloney to Wardha to see Mr. Gandhi. He agreed.

August 7, 1935

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I am extremely thankful to you for your letter, in fact I have been strictly following your advice. I have met all worth meeting, including Mr. Baldwin. They all sympathized with my views and quite appreciated my suggestions, but there are obvious difficulties against accepting them just now. I have been told that in the fullness of time my visit will bear fruit, so I am returning now to India with the blessing of the new Viceroy, the Secretary of State and those others who count.

On my return, I will see your Excellency and will speak about my mission in greater detail.

I will be dining with Sir Findlater Stewart this evening and the day after tomorrow with Mr. Churchill. The meeting with the latter will, I believe, be very interesting.

I hope you are well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
G. D. Birla

H. E. SIR JOHN ANDERSON  
GOVERNOR OF BENGAL

**Lunched with the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill at His  
Country House**

August 9, 1935

A most remarkable man. As eloquent in private talk as he is in public speech. It is impossible to reproduce talk in writing. I was with him for two hours. Mrs. Churchill too is very interesting, but when her husband talks she simply listens. She was in India only for six hours last year.

Mr. Churchill was in the garden when I reached his house,



and so was sent for by his wife. He wore a workman's apron which he did not change at the lunch time, and went out again into the garden wearing a huge hat with a big feather in it. After lunch he took me round his garden and showed me the buildings that he had built and the bricks that he had layed with his own hands. He also showed me the pictures that he had painted. The house, its surroundings, its swimming pool, everything is most attractive. The water in the swimming pool is kept warm by a boiler. A pump draws water out of the pool, warms it, filters it and it is then pumped back in the pool. So I said to myself. "The cost of this luxury must be enormous." But he explained that he spent only £ 3 a week on it.

He did the 75% of the talking, the other 25, was divided between myself and Mrs. Churchill. I only occasionally interrupted by correcting him and putting a question or two, but I enjoyed the conversation. It was never boring. At times he showed great emotion. But he is badly informed about India. He has peculiar notions. Villages, he thinks, are entirely cut off in India from towns. I corrected this. No townsman is a pure townsman in India. Everyone maintains touch with the village. Twenty-five thousand men that I employ in my mills went to their villages more than once a year. Therefore on the roll there were more than 50,000.

He thought motors had not reached the villages. I corrected again; an American car can travel without roads and so it has penetrated every nook and corner of the country. He thought that educated men, graduates and politicians, were all in towns. Again corrected him. In my village, I said, I could produce half a dozen graduates, but of course they only came to the village and never stayed there permanently. He took great pride in calling himself a diehard. "A hundred million new souls had come to stay during the last thirty years." he said, "Their maintenance is a problem. Peace is essential for increasing production. So long as we maintained law and order, it was all right, though there were communal riots in. Lahore, Cawnpore, Calcutta, etc. Now these riots would increase and thus the masses would suffer." I told him that in Punjab there was already rural party composed of Jats and Mohammedans, under responsible Government parties were likely to be formed on economic lines. This may improve the situation. The communal award



had not helped, but in the absence of an agreement amongst us it became inevitable. I did not take such a pessimistic view. He said that he hoped I would be correct. He asked what was Mr. Gandhi doing. I explained. He was immensely interested. "Mr. Gandhi has gone very high in esteem since he stood up for the untouchables." He wanted to know in detail about the untouchability work. I explained. He was glad that I was the president of the Anti-Untouchability League. Then he asked about Mr. Gandhi's village work. I explained. "Why was the Indian agriculturalist deteriorated his method of cultivation?" This he said was the opinion of Lord Linlithgow. I said, "Because he has been neglected all along." "Well you have the opportunity now. I do not like the Bill but it is now in the statute. I am not going to bother any more, but do not give us a chance to say that we anticipated a breakdown. The diehards would be pleased if there was a breakdown. You have got immense powers. Theoretically the Governors have all the powers, but in practice Socialists had all the powers when they came into office, but they did not do anything radical. The Government will never use the safeguards. So make it a success." I said, "What is the test of your success?" He said, "My test is improvement in the lot of the masses, morally as well as materially. I do not care if you are more or less loyal to Great Britain. I do not care for more education but give the masses more butter. I stand for butter. As the French King said, "foul in the pot." Oh yes, I am every time for butter. Reduce the number of cows but improve their breed. Make every tiller of the soil his own landlord. Stop the best breed from being slaughtered. Provide a good bull for every village. You have a good Viceroy. Tell Mr. Gandhi to use the powers that are offered and make the thing a success. I did not meet Mr. Gandhi when he was in England; it was then rather awkward. My son, though, met him. But I should like to meet him now. I would love to go to India before I die. If I went there I would stay for six months."

He asked me whether Mr. Gandhi wanted to wreck the constitution. I said, "Mr. Gandhi is indifferent. He believes that the political liberty will come through our own efforts and that our political progress will depend entirely upon us. He is therefore engaged in uplifting the people. Constitution does not interest him much." He agreed. He asked if he come to India would

he be well received. I told him, "I can assure you on that point." He said he did not want to go until Lord Willingdon had left India but he would love to go after that. He said, "I am genuinely sympathetic towards India. I have got real fears about the future. India, I feel, is a burden on us. We have to maintain an army and for the sake of India we have to maintain Singapore and near East Strength. If India could look after herself we would be delighted. After all, the span of life is very small and I would not be too selfish. I would be too delighted if the reform was a success. I have all along felt that there are fifty Indias. But you have got the things now and you make it success and if you do it I will support that. You should get much more."

95

September 23, 1935

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

I reached here on the 12th and after that, saw Gandhiji at Wardha. I told him of my impressions and also of the messages that I had brought from Lord Halifax, yourself and Sir Samuel Hoare. He was very much impressed and I have been able to get a promise from him in accordance with your message that he would use his influence with the Congress so that no new commitments in respect of the Reforms be made until the arrival of Lord Linlithgow.

I am finding a great contrast here to the congenial atmosphere that prevailed in England. Lord Linlithgow will have to work hard to improve this atmosphere which is full of mutual distrust. And it will be difficult task but I am not unhopeful. Gandhiji is very reasonable and if Lord Linlithgow would tackle him properly, I hope—of course a big hope—that it may be possible on constitutional lines. I know your feelings about the new Reforms but the politicians here say to themselves that if the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which by an overwhelming majority was turned down twice in the Assembly could be certified by the Governor-General, how any hope could be entertained of any constitutional democracy succeeding? You



may say that today the Government not being responsible to the Assembly, the latter's verdict could not be accepted by the Executive. Technically, this is correct but if we are on the eve of a new era, such an argument does not hold good. So long as the public opinion is flouted, the popular element naturally cannot believe that a miracle will happen under the new constitution and the service—which will be a very important factor even under the new constitution—will suddenly adapt itself to the new position. What, however, I am hoping is that Lord Linlithgow's personality may begin to react on the service and thus the new Reforms may be converted into a real democracy. The success of the Reforms, as I have said all along, will depend not on its contents but on the mutual trust and better understanding. The popular element representing the country and the Governor-General and the Governors representing the present Executive will have to come nearer each other on the basis of permanent understanding. I am, however, not unhopeful. In a way I got success in London. Gandhiji's assurance about not making any new commitment until the new Viceroy comes is, I feel, another success for which I thank God. But until the new Viceroy comes, I will have little to do. So I am waiting for the arrival of the new Viceroy with hope and until then will continue my humble efforts.

I could not go to Scotland after all. Could you give me a letter of introduction on the Secretary of the Bengal Delimitation Committee? I had spoken to you about the matter which I want to take up with that Committee and if you don't feel any embarrassment, please send me a letter so that I can have a personal talk with the Secretary.

Please keep me well guided and enlightened about the feeling on your side.

With the kindest regards,

*I remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas Birla*

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
SEYMOUR HOUSE  
17 WATERLOO PLACE  
LONDON. S.W.1



September 23, 1935

DEAR LORD ZETLAND,

I landed at Bombay on the 12th and immediately thereafter went to Wardha where Gandhiji is doing village-uplift work. I had many conversations with him. I conveyed to him my impressions that I gathered in London and told him how I was struck with the sympathy, sincerity and goodwill of those whom I met there. Especially I told him of my conversations with Your Lordship and with Lord Linlithgow, Halifax and Lothian. I also gave him the messages that I had brought from his personal friends, Lords Halifax, Lothian and Sir Samuel Hoare—and with which I expressed also my entire agreement—that it would be inadvisable for the Congress to make any new commitments in respect to the Reforms until Gandhiji had the opportunity to understand the position first hand after the arrival of the new Viceroy. I need hardly say that he was very much impressed with what I conveyed. He could not help feeling that the atmosphere which I said I found in London was not prevailing in India, but all the same, he has asked me to write back to Your Lordship and his other friends that so far as he is concerned, he would advise the Congress not to make any new commitments with respect to the Reforms until the new Viceroy's arrival in India and he has promised to use his influence to that end.

I am extremely satisfied with the results so far. The limited success in England and Gandhiji's response thereto are encouraging enough for the time being and they create a hope in my mind. Mutual understanding is a task very difficult and yet very important. I say very difficult because having come back from England where I saw nothing but goodwill, I cannot help noticing the contrast in India. It will therefore require great patience and goodwill on both sides to achieve the desired end. In my own humble way, I will continue to work for the same. But I do not find much to do until the arrival of the new Viceroy.

I did not use the letter which Your Lordship so kindly gave to me for Lord Brabourne. He was not in Bombay when I landed and I heard from Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel that the latter and Mr. Bhulabhai Desai were invited by the Governor to see

him and both of them had a long talk. I dare say Your Lordship knows all about it. Mr. Patel brought back a good impression of the Governor, but remarked at the same time that the Governor, however sympathetic would require great courage to reverse the wheel of the machinery in the direction of trust and friendliness. I would add that it would require courage on both sides.

Recently, the Ashram of Bardoli which belonged to Mr. Patel has been returned by the Bombay Government. This may be said to be the result of the personal touch. I hope this will be cultivated. The release of Jawaharlal Nehru too was a very statesman-like step. On the other hand, certification of the Criminal Law Amendment Act is keeping the past feeling alive. I am writing this just to acquaint Your Lordship with the situation and I hope you permit me to do so. Surveying my efforts of the past four months, I am not unhopeful. I have found Mr. Gandhi extremely responsive and this is a great satisfaction.

With kindest regards,

*I remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas Birla*

THE RT. HON'BLE THE MARQUESS OF ZETLAND

P.C.G.E.I., G.C.I.E.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA

INDIA OFFICE

WHITE HALL

LONDON

September 23, 1935

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

I landed at Bombay on the 12th by s. s. "Narkunda" and immediately thereafter went to Wardha where Gandhiji is doing village-uplift work. I had many conversations with him. I conveyed to him my impressions that I gathered in London and told him how I was struck with the sympathy, sincerity

and goodwill of those whom I met there. Especially I told him of my conversations with Your Lordship, Lord Zetland, Lord Halifax and Lord Lothian. I also gave him the messages that I had brought from his personal friends—Lords Halifax, Lothian and Sir Samuel Hoare—and with which I expressed also my entire agreement that it would not be advisable for the Congress to make any new commitments in respect to the Reforms until Gandhiji had the opportunity to understand the position first hand after the arrival of Your Lordship. I need hardly say that he was very much impressed with what I conveyed. He cannot help feeling that the atmosphere which I said I found in London was not prevailing in India, but all the same he has asked me to write back to assure Your Lordship and other friends that so far as he is concerned, he would advise the Congress not to make any new commitments with respect to the Reforms until Your Lordship's arrival in India and he has promised to use his influence to that end.

I am extremely satisfied with the results so far. The limited success in England and Gandhiji's response thereto are encouraging enough for the time being and they create a hope in my mind. Mutual understanding is a task very difficult and yet very important. I say very difficult because having come back from England where I saw nothing but goodwill, I cannot help noticing the contrast in India, specially in actions. It will therefore require great patience and goodwill on both sides to achieve the desired end. In my own humble way I will continue to work for the same. But I do not find much to do until the arrival of Your Lordship.

With kindest regards,

*I remain,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE MARQUESS OF LINLITHGOW  
29 CHESHAM PLACE  
LONDON  
S. W. 1



September 23, 1935

DEAR MR. CHURCHILL,

I am writing this to thank you for the kindness that I received at your hands when I was in London. I cannot forget the two happy hours that I passed at your house, and I can't describe how I enjoyed your charming company.

Immediately after my arrival in India I met Mr. Gandhi and told him of my impression and the conversation with you and other friends. He was very much interested to hear specially of my interview with you and remarked, "I have got a good recollection of Mr. Churchill when he was in the Colonial Office and somehow or other since then I have held the opinion that I can always rely on his sympathy and goodwill."

I was very much delighted to read your public interview as regards your Indian attitude in future. Since my talk with you, this did not come to me as a surprise but I was delighted that what you said to me in private conversation was subsequently expressed publicly. This, I think, will have a good effect.

This may find you in turmoil of European crisis. I am rather anxious.

With kindest regards,

*I remain,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE WINSTON CHURCHILL, M.P.  
CHARTWELL, WESTERHAM  
KENT

99

September 23, 1935

DEAR LORD HALIFAX,

I am enclosing herewith a copy of my letter to Lord Zetland. If there is anything where Your Lordship could guide me, please do so. I hope I deserve the confidence.

This may find you very busy with the European crisis. The future seems to be black but I hope God will save the World from another war.

With kindest regards,

*I remain,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE THE VISCOUNT OF HALIFAX  
88 EATON SQUARE  
LONDON S. W. 1

100

WARDHA,  
September 28, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter has arrived. Bapuji firmly believed that Mother is in no danger. You should prolong your stay till she is fully recovered. You yourself need a rest.

That both Malaviyaji and Bapuji will be in Delhi is a good piece of news indeed. Both will have time to spare for detailed talks there.

We have been getting news about Devdas. He is already on the way to complete recovery. Your diagnosis of his ill health that this might be due to his neglect of physical exercise is quite correct. Parasnath has been to Simla for a couple of days.

Both must have discussed things about the management (of the Hindustan Times).

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

101

*Private*

October 1, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I have this morning received your letter of the 23rd September enclosing a copy of your letter to Lord Zetland.

I have been very much interested to read what you say and it is valuable to have your judgment of how Mr. Gandhi was affected by what you had to tell him of your talks in this country.

As we agreed when you were over here, it is not possible to devise short cuts in this matter and, as you say, the situation is one which demands great patience and goodwill on both sides. It is, I think, definitely good that Mr. Gandhi should have asked you to say that he would advise the Congress not to make any new commitments until the new Viceroy has arrived in India.

You have no doubt sent a copy of your letter to Lord Linlithgow.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Halifax

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.



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COLONIAL OFFICE,  
DOWNING STREET, S. W. 1,  
October 4, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letter of the 23rd September. When I returned to England from Marienbad I heard about your attempt to get me on the telephone from Marseilles. I am very sorry that you had all this trouble for nothing, but as you have done what seems to be turning out best in your own interests, I am very glad you made the move. Recently Mr. Gubbay has been in touch with me and you may rely on me to give him such help as I can.

You are quite right in saying that you cannot understand how Italy can defy the whole world. She could not possibly do that, and I am quite sure that she will do her best to avoid any European extension of the conflict. It is quite obvious that her financial and military position, straddled across the Suez Canal, is a most difficult one, and even if she has all the success for which she hopes in her ruthless Abyssinian gamble, it is not going to work out a good business proposition for her.

I am very glad indeed to hear that your visit to England was such a great success, I felt sure it would be. As you know, I always take a great interest in your doings and was very ready to help in any way. But I could see that you were managing quite well on your own, as indeed was only natural, and I did not do more than have a long talk with Findlater Stewart about you and your ideas.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Maffey

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.

*Personal*

BLICKING HALL,  
AYMHAM,  
BORFOLK,  
October 11, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I was delighted to get your letter of the 23rd September, and to hear that there is a good prospect of Mahatma Gandhi waiting until the arrival of the new Viceroy before making any new commitments.

Government is a very difficult business. Aristotle and the Greeks regarded it as the greatest of the art. People can only learn how to govern by assuming responsibility and testing their ideas by practice. I believe the whole future of India now turns upon whether or not her young men and women throw themselves into the elections in order that they may assume responsibility for government, first in the Provinces and then at the Centre. It is only in this practical work that they will develop their political muscles and the kind of character and ability that will enable them to deal with the fundamental problems which confront India, whatever constitution she has—communalism, poverty, minorities, the princes, the power of property and so on. I venture to send you a copy of *The Twentieth Century* in which I give my reasons for thinking that the fundamental change of heart, on which the Mahatma has always insisted, has taken place here, and that real responsibility for Indian government will rest on Indian shoulders. I wonder if you would send it on to him, after you have read it, if you think he has not seen it.

If after having trained their muscles in the constitution Young India finds that the constitution itself prevents them from achieving the reforms which matter, they will have both a case for demanding revision, or if it is denied, for taking more direct action, and the experience and training in practical government they have so gained may enable them to achieve success and good government for India as the outcome. But if they now go in either for civil disobedience and non-co-operation or for violent revolutionary methods, they will fail to learn how to govern in a liberal and constitutional way and get confirmed in

those rigid and dictatorial methods which are wrecking Europe by destroying individual liberty, replacing individual thinking by mass organisation, and leading the world back to war, and which will certainly divide and lay India in ruins. I am certain that if the new India shows practical capacity to give India good government, as the young Dominions did, full power will pass into its hands, as easily and inevitably as elsewhere. The main thought in Britain today is not to retain control over India, though it wants to trade with it, but whether India can become self-government without plunging into catastrophe. Directly British public opinion feels that the political leaders of India are getting a grip on their problems of Indian government and reforms in a practical and sagacious way the safeguards will disappear, as they have in Canada and Australia. From every point of view, therefore, the immediate necessity is for Congress and its rivals to take hold of provincial government and make a success of it and from there go on to do the same by the centre.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Lothian

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

104

HOPETOWN HOUSE,  
SOUTH QUEENSFERRY,  
SCOTLAND,  
October 30, 1935

*Personal*

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I am happy to have word of you and to hear that you landed safely in India.

I am so glad that your impressions in this country were as



you described. My own strong impression is that opinion here has moved a long way in the past ten years in the direction of sympathy with Indian aspirations. I am sure that it is very necessary to make full allowance for the fact that the mass opinion can only move at a certain speed. The older generation, which is commonly the generation in charge of affairs and which leads to public opinion, cannot be expected to accommodate itself to new circumstances and points of view as easily as those who are younger. Indeed, the average man does not easily adapt himself to new circumstances after the age of 45. These considerations apply, of course, with equal force to those in both countries and to men of every race. Great patience will be required, and the courage to stand undismayed against disappointment if, in the earlier stages of any endeavour, good results do not immediately emerge.

I must make the best I can of the new Constitution; and so far as I am able, my anxious concern must be to make it possible for men and women of all shades of political opinion to work within its bounds. Probably you would agree that the wisest cannot hope at this time to gauge with exactitude the manner in which, in all its bearings, the constitution will affect the political situation in India. My own feeling therefore is that whatever may be our present opinions, we shall all of us do well to suspend final judgment until in the event the picture clears a little.

Meantime, as you, I think, already know, I shall be found most willing to play my part in endeavouring to fortify and extend that spirit of mutual respect and mutual confidence without which no happy outcome can be expected, and to make and maintain those relations of personal friendship which so often serve to ease the burden and to lessen the difficulties of public life, and which are therefore of the utmost value and importance.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

November 3, 1935

MY DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

Thanks for your letter. I entirely agree with what you say and am also working for it in my humble way with reasonable hope. I also agree with you that "the fundamental change of heart has taken place in England". I myself was impressed on this point in London. I also agree that Britain hesitates because she sincerely doubts "whether India can become self-governing without plunging into catastrophe". To dispel the misgivings we have to prove our ability. I fear, however, that even though we tried to prove our capacity to govern we would, in the present atmosphere, fail. We are likely to come in clash with our "partners" in India and our inexperience, plus their hostility and suspicion may prove us utterly incapable. I hope, however, that the change of heart that is to be seen in England will also be reflected in the Britishers in India, I mean the Service and the British mercantile community. And for this purpose I am counting much on Lord Linlithgow. While, therefore, I will continue to do my best on this side of influence, Gandhiji's mind, I hope, you will not ignore the other side. For us to succeed, a change in the psychology of our "partners" has to come, and I hope it will come under the inspiration of Lord Linlithgow. I hope he is keeping himself in touch with the Indian affairs.

I will send a copy of *The Twentieth Century* to Gandhiji, and I am sure he will very much appreciate your long letter to me which I will show him personally.

You have not replied to one portion of my letter which referred to the Delimitation Committee. If it was just an oversight then I would remind you again; if on the other hand, you felt embarrassed then I apologise.

I hope you are well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
LONDON

106

**Interview with the Governor of Bengal**  
(Time : 12.30 p.m.; lasted about an hour)

November 14, 1935

Was very pleased with the results and endorsed the impression that I brought from England. I told him of the difference in the atmosphere between the two countries and said, "After all, it will not be Downing Street or White Hall which would matter but the man on the spot." I asked his advice as to how I could cut the ice at Delhi for creating better understanding. I was trying to explain Mr. Gandhi who, I thought, represented the best of India and who, in spite of the non-co-operation and civil disobedience movement, was, in my opinion, the best co-operator. And in this task, I was hampered because I myself was distrusted. He saw the difficulty and said, "It would be the new Viceroy whose statesmanship and leadership would count," but I said that in the matter of details, it would be the official who would count and that I should like them to be friendly and trustful. He advised me to put in touch with Gregg whom he liked and whom he would speak. I asked if I should develop someone in Clive Street. He replied, "Benthell." He would speak to him. We discussed many other things. He was very cordial. He would always help.

107

*Air Mail*

*Private*

29 CHESHAM PLACE,  
LONDON, S.W. 1,  
November 26, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Your letter of the 15th November came safely to hand yesterday, and I send you this line by Air Mail to tell you that



I hope you have by now received my letter to you dated the 30th October.

I think I ought in courtesy to have explained that the delay in answering your original letter of the 23rd September had been due to my having had an operation for the removal of tonsils—not a very serious matter, but rather an unpleasant one for those of ripe years.

This country is settling down after the turmoil of the General Election, and the Government returns to his work with prestige much enhanced by the verdict of the polls. The international position is difficult and obscure, and no very reliable news seems to be available as to the course of the campaign in Abyssinia. My guess is that Italy will be found ready to discuss some reasonable arrangement towards the end of the campaigning season. I think it probable that the pressure upon Italy of the economic sanctions is proving more irksome to that country than was at first expected, and if the U.S.A. cease to export petrol to Italy, her difficulties will be most formidable.

I shall always be glad to hear your news if at any time you care to communicate with me.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

108

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
November 26, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Lord Linlithgow has written to me a very nice letter. Bapu will see it when he comes here.

There has been a partial strike in the mill. The demands put forward are no cut in wages, no dismissal and one or two very minor things. I don't know what to say because those who have put forward the demands evidently are not in touch with

the facts. There has been no cut in the wages nor there is any intention to do so. I am circulating a leaflet today explaining the position to the workers that if they don't return to work, they will have to be paid off and new men will be recruited. I hope, however, that those who are absent will return to work. I can understand some discontent among the weavers because of the mills having worked only for  $23\frac{1}{2}$  days instead of 26 days in the month of October on account of holidays, those who were on piecework naturally proportionately got less but the spinners being on fixed wages were not affected. This fact is, I think, understood by all the intelligent workers and should be understood by persons like Satyavati but the 'leaders' have no desire to understand the situation or to accept our assurance. However, I will try to manage the things as best as I can. Satyavati saw Lakshminivas and she was told that there was no cut. She had no reply but confessed that she may not be able to influence those who wanted strike.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

109

WARDHA,  
November 26, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

Yesterday Malkani had fixed it with Thakkar Bapa that he would work as assistant secretary. But this morning he came to me and told me : "It will not be possible for me to function as assistant secretary." I have written to Thakkar Bapa about this. A copy of my letter to him is enclosed and it is not necessary to add anything now.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

110

November 28, 1935

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

I was very much relieved to receive Your Lordship's letter dated the 30th October. I find now that I was unnecessarily worried about my letter which I feared had miscarried.

I very much appreciate what Your Lordship says. I agree that "great patience will be required, and the courage to stand undismayed against disappointment, if in the earlier stages of any endeavour good results do not immediately emerge". I am applying this to the both sides but what I hope is that mutual understanding may lead to the appreciation of mutual difficulties and once it is done, a common ground may be found to cope with them. I am keeping myself in touch with Sir John Anderson and also am likely to see the Governor of Bombay when he comes to Delhi. On the other hand, I am keeping myself in fullest touch with Gandhiji and every one of these conversations is making me more hopeful of a position in which if nothing substantial is achieved, at least mutual appreciation of the difficulties on either side may be realised. Of course, no concrete step is possible until the arrival of Your Lordship and I am looking forward to that time with the utmost confidence and hope.

With kindest regards,

*I beg to remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas Birla*

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE MARQUESS OF LINLITHGOW  
29 CHESHAM PLACE  
LONDON S.W. 1



111

WARDHA,  
November 28, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter of the 26th. Bapu had the following telegram from one Hanumat Sahai, Chaulpuri, Delhi:

BIRLA MILL'S LABOURERS' STRIKE SIX DAYS. HEAVY WAGE CUTS. AUTHORITIES UNYIELDING. POLICE AND GOONDAS EMPLOYED. READ "NATIONAL CALL". PRAY INTERVIEWS.

Bapu dictated the following reply which has been wired to him:

YOUR TELEGRAM. INTERVENTION IMPROPER WITHOUT FULL KNOWLEDGE. CIRCUMSTANCES SUGGEST IMPARTIAL ARBITRATION SUBJECT MEN'S RETURN WORK AND BOTH PARTIES ACCEPTING AWARD AS FINAL BINDING.

GANDHI

I have not seen the *National Call*, but I suppose it must be full of all kinds of rumours and utterances. You will of course accept arbitration, if it is genuinely offered.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

112

November 29, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Only one-third of the mill is working just now and that also for one shift. It could be said that only 15% mill is working. As it is not desirable to work partially, I may close the mill completely in a day or two. There has been on behalf of the management tactlessness and mismanagement. Every strike which has

no strong ground can be attributed to mismanagement. The workers came to see me yesterday and they admitted that there was no reduction in wages and that the strike was somewhat a surprise and that there were minor grievances which should have been rectified. I agreed with them but since they have struck the work, they are trying to make the best of it and have put forward a demand for increase in the wages. I told them definitely that I was not going to consider anything of the kind. The mill was losing for the last 12 months and yet we did not think of any reduction in the wages. That itself should satisfy them. They went back quite pleased and promised to talk to the other workers. I don't know how far they will succeed but so far as I could see, the workers are getting a little doubtful about their case. But for Satyavati and others they would come round immediately. The Secretary of the mill made a declaration refuting the charges as regards the wage reduction and declared to put the case in the hands of Bapu or Malaviyaji. That challenge was accepted in the meeting by Satyavati and others but I understand that they are not keen that Bapu should take up this question. On the other hand, I am not quite prepared to deal with Satyavati. She is very keen that her authority should be recognised and that seems to be the main trouble just now. This is just for Bapu's information.

I received your letter about Malkani.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
C/O MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA

November 30, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have closed down the mill since yesterday. It was a heavy task to keep the mill running partially. There was intimidation

and those who were working were not giving an efficient job. The mill has been losing for the last twelve months and by closing it down it would not make much difference. But the tragedy is that 3,000 men are idle. The labour's representatives, that is, the workers of my mill who are elected representatives, saw me 2/3 days back, as I had written to you in my previous letter, and they went back quite satisfied but did not cut much ice because of the leaders. Last evening, I got a message through a friend that Satyavati would like to see me with the workers but I replied that I would not negotiate with her. I have also replied that the best course for her would be to send the workers to me and leave them to me. They know me, I know them. They have liked me all along. Why should then they be alienated from me? After all, it is myself with whom they have to work. Satyavati would not take that course. To excite is easy, to calm requires courage.

I had expected that Bapu would just reply what he has done. I would be prepared to accept his arbitration if the leaders would be prepared to leave it to Bapu. But they would not leave the matters to him.

This strike has been a great tragedy. I would not say that there was no grievance, although it is a lie to say that wages are reduced. But a strike could not take place if it were managed properly. We had no real strike in this mill after 1928. Although in 1933 and 1934 Satyavati and others did their best, they could not get the workers to down the tools. Had Mandelia lived, there would be no strike because the grievances would be rectified. It all happened during the last six months. Had they approached me as they usually do when they have any complaint, it would have been settled. But Satyavati was searching for an occasion and so she got a fertile soil. And now rectifying the past mismanagement would not satisfy the workers as they are under the influence of Satyavati. I personally think in a week's time the workers may come to me and if left alone, I would be able to send them back quite pleased. In any case, as I said to Bapu at Wardha, he has always my standing power of attorney. Out of the three thousand workers, hardly two hundred went to continue the strike but others would not work just now so long as there is intimidation.

I will be leaving this place for Gwalior in a day or two



because now that I have closed down the mill, nothing more has to be done until the workers see me. If I go to them, they will misunderstand.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
C/O MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA

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*Copy*  
*Express Telegram*  
MAHATMA GANDHI  
WARDHA

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
9.40 p.m., December 1, 1935

SATYAVATI AND OTHERS MET ME INSISTING ON RECOGNITION REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER THEIR COMMITTEE AND NEGOTIATION UNION WITH THEM. I INTEND REFUSING THIS COURSE BECAUSE BIRLA MILL COMMITTEE IN EXISTENCE SINCE 1928. OFFICERS ELECTED EVERY YEAR. EVERY MEMBER CONTRIBUTING ONE PER CENT OF WAGES. MILL CONTRIBUTING EQUAL AMOUNT. FUND ADMINISTERED BY UNION COMMITTEE FOR WELFARE WORKS. IF PRESENT MILL UNION OFFICERS FORFEITED CONFIDENCE NEW ELECTION COULD BE HELD TO NEGOTIATE WITH ME BUT UNFAIR TO RECOGNISE NEW AUTHORITY WHICH CAME INTO EXISTENCE ONLY DUE TO STRIKE WITH UNCERTAIN FUTURE. SATYAVATI AND HER COLLEAGUES' ATTITUDE HAVING BEEN IRRESPONSIBLE SO FAR DEALING WITH THEM MAY COMPLICATE MATTERS IN FUTURE. PLEASE WIRE YOUR ADVICE.

GHANSHYAMDAS

*Copy*

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
December 2, 1935

DEAR MR. HANUMAT SAHAI,

With reference to our conversation last evening, after giving very careful consideration to your demand that I should recognise the representative character of your Committee and negotiate with it alone in connection with the strike, I have come to the conclusion that it would not be possible for me to adopt this course without doing grave injustice to the existing Birla Cotton Mill Union.

This Union was established in 1928 and it has been functioning since then. Every worker contributes 1% of his wages to the Union and it receives an equal amount from the mill supplemented by a further grant to cover any deficit in a particular year. This fund is administered by the Union Committee and more than two thousand rupees are spent by it on welfare work every month. The officers of the Union are elected by the workers of each department and whenever there has been any misunderstanding or disruption between the mill and the workers in the past, this Union has been the instrument for the settlement of the issue involved. It is surprising that the workers if they had any grievance, should not have represented their case to the management through this Union. If the present officers of the Union have forfeited the confidence of their fellow workers, the latter are at liberty to elect another executive but it would hardly be fair for me to ignore the existence of this Union which has been functioning with such usefulness for the last seven years and agree to deal with your Committee which came into existence only the other day to make the strike a success and about the future of which nothing can be said with certainty yet.

I assured you and I write again to tell you that I am prepared to give you and your friends as well-wishers of labour, all facilities to examine the records and satisfy yourselves that neither has the management made nor does it contemplate making any cuts in the rates of wages. The officers of the Birla Mill Trade Union who met me a few days ago, were assured on this

point and they seemed satisfied; and if the strikers choose to send their representatives from amongst themselves, I shall be glad to discuss the matter and satisfy them too.

To recognise a new ad hoc body like your Committee is to kill the existing Union which would, in my opinion, be the grossest injustice to the workers as well as to the mill. I fear therefore it would not be possible for me to adopt this course. I repeat my assurance that short of such recognition, I am prepared to give you and your friends every facility to satisfy yourselves on the point of reduction in rates of wages.

*Yours truly,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

MR. HANUMAT SAHAI  
DELHI

116

WARDHA,  
December 2, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have gone through both of your letters. You might have received my telegram this morning. What I conveyed through it was that there would be no harm in seeing Satyavati, justice being your sole objective. But she must have the power of attorney to speak in behalf of the workers. It would be better if the matter is submitted to the arbitration of someone acceptable to both sides. I did not offer to function as one. How could I? Someone else will have to be chosen to do the job. While tackling this matter don't lose patience.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu



I reproduce the telegram sent by Bapu this morning:

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

WITHOUT DIMINISHING INFLUENCE OR DAMAGING STATUS OF  
RECOGNISED UNION OFFER LISTEN COMPLAINTS BY WHOMSOEVER  
MADE AND REDRESS LEGITIMATE PROVED GRIEVANCE. PERSONS  
THEMSELVES NOT EMPLOYEES SHOULD PROVE THEIR AUTHORITY  
SPEAK FOR AGGRIEVED WORKERS. IF THIS ADVICE DOES NOT  
FIND ECHO IN YOUR HEART IT IS CLEAR I HAVE NOT GRASPED  
TRUE SITUATION. IN THAT EVENT YOU SHOULD ACT ACCORDING  
YOUR BEST JUDGMENT.

BAPU

A report appeared in *The Hindustan Times* described that Satyavati is the wife of a dismissed employee. Satyavati complained about this. Bapu has sent a reply attributing the report to some reporter's cursedness, and adding that Ghanshyamdas himself would not relish it.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

## 117

December 3, 1935

MY DEAR BAPU,

I got your telegram.

Satyavati has strong political prejudices which are definitely influencing her attitude towards the strike. This is the reason why I am reluctant to deal with her. Maybe I am prejudiced. I have done my best to shake it off, but something in me warns me against dealing with her. Exactly such a situation arose in 1928 when I was asked by Jawaharlalji to deal with Lala Shankerlal. I said I would rather deal with the former or his

father than with Shankerlal. Jawaharlalji was insistent and so we had to part company. This time it is Satyavati. Brijkrishna is very anxious about this situation. I told him that he may get himself interested and I will be prepared to negotiate with him or with Shivam or with Krishna Nayar but not with Satyavati. She talks of Socialism of the virtue of spreading discontent and of the abolition of the present system and all that. I have made my position clear in my letter to Hanumat Sahai, a colleague of Satyavati. A copy of the letter is enclosed.

I take up this attitude: "Bring all the grievances, I will listen to them. I will satisfy you that there is no wage reduction but I can't recognise your authority because it implies mutual obligations and I don't expect that you would fulfil your part of the obligations. For this purpose, I can bind myself only to the labour or to the existing Union but not to your Committee." She says she must have recognition first and until then she would not talk. The whole tussle, therefore, is about recognition so far as she is concerned and I have not been able to reconcile myself to her position.

Workers have been coming to me, some of them with hungry looks and I have been feeding them. I expect that they will come in larger numbers in a day or two to meet me. They complain of intimidation and when we started giving them protection through our own employees, it became counter intimidation. So it had to be stopped. I understand many heads have been broken by the other side, making counter allegations. But when I listen to the workers, I feel that 75% of them are held up on account of intimidation. Police did not help us. Mohammedan goondas residing in the locality are against us, I am told, because there are very few Mohammedans in the mill. And the Socialists have got a fine opportunity. So, I am feeling a bit helpless.

Though there has been no wage cut yet due to engine trouble and more stoppages, the piece worker actually got less than what he got in the previous month and he sincerely believes that we have manipulated the rates. Besides this, there is some genuine grievance about treatment by the officers and this flared up the workers in the absence of proper handling. Now I have explained to Satyavati all these things and I also told the Union Officers who came to me, about all this, but the

result of all this could be seen by the workers only after they again work. Just now, the situation being tense, a number of influences are working. So, I am watching the situation with some humiliation because you know how I feel this estrangement. I hope a few days more will ease the situation.

Please tell me if I have erred in my policy. I have undoubtedly annoyed Satyavati by my refusal to recognise her authority. But I felt that in going further I may create complications for future and probably more strike and daily discontent. After all it is the workers whom I have to please and I thought that unless I deal direct with them, I would not be able to make them realise that I am their best friend.

You can rely on me to take actions which would not be against the interest of the workers and I hope this itself should be sufficient to guide me on the right path.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

PUJYA MAHATMA GANDHI  
WARDHA

## 118

December 5, 1935

MY DEAR BAPU,

Yesterday the workers saw me at last. When I refused to negotiate with Satyavati, there was a deadlock and Brijkrishna asked what could be the next step. I said I would be prepared to negotiate with him. He said the workers were afraid that if they negotiated with me, they might eventually be dismissed. They were assured on this point and so they came and discussed the things for three hours. I had written to you in my previous letter that they sincerely believed, on account of reduction of wages due to engine stoppages, that there had been a cut. On talking I found that there was no such misunderstanding and that they knew the situation quite well. They admitted that the



strike was wrong step and when they put forward their demand I found that their chief demand was that the 12% cut in the weaving section which took place in 1933 should be restored. They admitted that the strike was not planned but once they had the strike they decided to put forward this point. I sternly refused to restore this cut on the ground that the cut was made on account of depreciation and since then, the condition if anything had become worse. The other things were all minor suggestions which I readily accepted. They requested to renew bonus. I again said that the mill was losing and so could not pay any bonus but most likely I would pay them something out of my personal pocket. They are coming again. They are thinking of forming another Union and asked my consent for this which I readily gave.

I agree that the reference to Satyavati in *The Hindustan Times* as “dismissed employee’s wife” was utterly wrong. When I met Satyavati I expressed my regret. I scolded the management of *The Hindustan Times* also for it but Parasnathji tells that it was inserted without his knowledge. The staff got a little provoked because the procession led by Satyavati and others shouted provocative slogans against *The Hindustan Times* and Parasnathji personally. They also gave the same treatment to the *Arjun* and the *Tej*. I, of course, did not escape. There was a regular terrorism and a number of heads were broken. Those strikers who wanted to come to me and talk were stopped by force and in one case a man’s face was besmeared with charcoal but I think this was all, in a way, natural in such an excitement and one should not take it very seriously.

Krishna Nayar met me yesterday and I asked him also to take interest in the matter. He confessed that he talked in the matter. He confessed that he talked against me to you but I said this did not matter much.

Yours affectionately,  
Ghanshyamdas

PUJYA MAHATMA GANDHI  
WARDHA

119

WARDHA,  
December 5, 1935

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Your letter to Hanumat Sahai is quite in order. Neither he nor Satyavati can claim to represent the workers. Only when the workers themselves elect them as such can any of them rightfully claim that status. But those who deserve anything must be given it. That was what I had meant in my last letter and I understand you are already doing it.

I do hope the worst is over by now. Your offer appears to be quite adequate.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

120

December 8, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I hope there is nothing alarming about Bapu's health. I hope it has nothing to do with soyabeans. In his old age, Bapu should not make any new experiments about food. He knows what suits him and why should he not continue the diet that has been found to be suitable after long experiments? I know fruits, vegetables, milk and dates have been found suitable in his case and I wish he would not substitute soyabeans for milk.

I had settled up the things with the representatives of the workers four days ago but the mill has yet to run. First of all, there was disagreement among the workers about the settlement. Some of them said, "What is it that we have gained?" And of course, in a way they are correct because the strike brought gains to none. The minor grievances could have been settled even without strike. When one makes a Balance Sheet of the period of the strike, an unpleasant truth is revealed that both the sides lost heavily without gain to anyone. So, for a few days there was this disagreement among the workers and now although the

agreement has been accepted by the Trade Union, I am getting opinion from Delhi. The Trade Union is composed of workers and also outsiders. This Union is now dictating the mill the mode of management. I have told the Manager to religiously stick to the agreement and also be prepared to listen to any grievance that is brought forward, but have also added that if anybody thinks that we have transferred the management of the mill to the Trade Union, then it should be made clear that we are not going to run the mill with such indiscipline. I have told the Manager to talk to Satyavati and others. Brijkrishna was very helpful and I think Krishna Nayar also saw the things clearly but they could not cut any ice with the workers. The new Trade Union seems to have fallen into the hands of what may be termed “undesirables”. The mill Manager is very much worried and I have told him that he should not be worried about anything. We should take correct attitude and if anybody wants to use compulsion we should be stiff and firm. So, I cannot say what is going to be the result of all this. The situation requires a little delicate handling. It has developed into an aftermath of Gandhi-Irwin Pact. I and Brijkrishna should be able to manage the things but the Trade Unionists having achieved a new position evidently will not listen to saner counsels. I will not worry you any more about the mill matters because even trying to acquaint Bapu with the facts would put some strain on him and I hate it. I will use my wits as best as I can and Bapu can rely on me to be fair according to my light.

Please keep me in touch about Bapu's health.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA



WARDHA,  
December 8, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

We are all so deeply thankful that the strike was over. The beauty of this whole business is that Krishna Nair's and Brijkrishna's version of the dispute tallies entirely with your version of it. That is bound to happen where none parties are acting on the square and have the welfare of the workers at heart. Krishna Nair gratefully mentions the graceful way in which you received the Labourer's representatives and discussed everything. In view of all this, may it not be well that this storm *did* break out?

Bapu has had a fairly bad breakdown and he realises it himself. The warning has come none too soon and I am thankful to say that Bapu has consented to abide by the doctor's instructions to the letter. We were wondering if the pain was not after all due to some awkward mechanical movement of the head, or to some kind of a sun stroke. But the heavy arrears of sleep that Bapu has been clearing ever since he has had the doctor's advice make it clear that he badly needed the sleep and that rest is the only cure of this ailment. The pressure which was 210 syst. at 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon was found to be 175 at 6 after three hours' complete rest and sleep. The pity is that though Bapu knows that rest is clearly indicated, he deliberately overdoes himself and simply brushes aside the warnings of humble ones like us.

We are hoping that a fortnight's complete rest may be all that is needed to enable him to undertake the programme in front of him on the days between 27th and 31st December and the tour in Gujarat. But if he does not feel fit by the 25th December I shall have to warn the International Fellowship people and shall have to consult the doctors about the advisability of cancelling the Gujarat programme. The Charkha Sangh meeting which is fixed for the 12th will not be postponed, but Bapu will not attend it.

Dr. Jivraj Mehta who was called as soon as the instrument registered an abnormally high pressure has just arrived and is examining Bapu as I am writing this. Bapu has had no pain

today, so far, and it is quite likely that the instrument will show a more reassuring record. No, it does not. It is 180 and 100 which is bad enough. I shall keep you regularly posted.

Yours sincerely,  
Mahadev

SJT. G. D. BIRLA  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

## 122

December 9, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I should have written yesterday one thing more about my mill's affairs. Since I wrote to Bapu last about Satyavati, I have been making independent enquiries about her and I must confess that I was unduly prejudiced against her. She is impulsive—and I am no less—and has got a lot of nonsensical views but I heard and found it myself whenever I talked to her that except in respect of certain "ideologies" with which she is too much obsessed, she was amenable to reason and argument. I am told that in advising labour, she took up a reasonable attitude. I feel that I did not do her full justice in expressing my views to Bapu about her which I did in one of my letters. Probably, I will speak to her one of these days. Maybe that same may be said about Farid-ul-haq although he without any reason or rhyme attacked me from public platform last year. The only reason I was told was that *The Hindustan Times* was supporting Asaf Ali.

Another revelation which I made was that all these leaders including Brijkrishna were founding in strength. Whatever was settled with me, they had not the courage to say publicly. And while I did not make any statement because it was decided that Brijkrishna would do this, on account of his fear from certain quarters he held up the statement for four days which caused me a lot of embarrassment. They all confessed in private conversation that the strikes were mixed up with undesirables, that there

was no discipline and that they were unreasonable, and yet the statement by Brijkrishna was withheld for four days. This remark, I think, could be applied to 90% of our public leaders. They don't know to say 'no'. If I may say, had not the leaders made exciting speeches from platforms and told them publicly what they said in private, the strike would have been averted and thus the labour would not lose what it has lost. This, however, is the criticism of our public leaders. Brijkrishna, Krishna and Shivam were all helpful probably because we all belong to Bapu's camp.

I understand from today's papers that Bapu has been asked to live on fruit and milk diet. I feel that this trouble was due to soyabeans. After all, at this age for Bapu to digest dal whether it is soyabeans or moongbeans, is an impossible task. I hope he is improving.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

123

WARDHAGANJ,  
December 9, 1935

GHANSHYAMDASJI  
BIRLA HOUSE  
NEW DELHI

BAPU PRACTICALLY ALL RIGHT. LUNGS CLEAR. NO COUGH. NO CAUSE  
GOING BOMBAY. WRITING.

SUSHILA



December 10, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Although the Press is giving reassuring news about Bapu's health, I am rather worried. This illness is a serious warning from nature. He is old is a fact which I doubt whether he has fully realised. He wants rest, physical and mental. And even good things like sun-bath are bad beyond a limit. After a prolonged experience he knows what suits him and he should stick to that. For others, experiments are being made by specialists and we would be content with it. I know soyabean is a good thing for those who can digest it. But not so for Bapu. His stomach is good enough only for dates, milk and fruits and for God's sake let him stick to these things. I tried to get Devdas today on the phone but could not get him. I am again sending him a wire to talk to me tomorrow morning.

The strike is over but I am not yet free from worries. To some extent, the discipline has been disturbed. False hopes have been raised which are impossible to be fulfilled but I will try to manage the situation as best I can. I would very much like a man, like Krishna Nayar to take personal interest in my workers. Because then he would know what it is to manage a mill. I am going to speak to him. However, I need not worry myself or yourself any more about the matter but I should like to tell you a lot of things about my experience in the strike when you come to Delhi. It was not a pleasant experience. Even the best friends thought they could teach me how to manage a cotton mill.

Please keep me well informed about Bapu's health. I had once suggested not seriously that Bapu should stop his correspondence entirely. I realised that it would be an impossibility. But can't Bapu put some restriction on the correspondence? Suppose he decides not to give more than two hours a day to correspondence. Similarly he may fix up a maximum time for interviews. This may give him more sleep and more leisure. He

must be made to realise that he is an old man and wants more leisure and rest.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

125

WARDHA,  
December 13, 1935

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had your telegram. I sent reply at once which must have considerably relieved you. I enclose the latest bulletin.

The problem is how to give Bapu rest. Place is of no consequence. Delhi or Maganwadi or Bombay could be equally bad or good. If he agrees to take rest any place would be good for him. He has mastered many a difficult art, but certainly not the art of combining work with rest wisely. Could not friends like you whom he listens make him do one of the two things?—

(1) That he takes a day's complete rest (over and above the silent Monday which is a fraud so far as rest goes) during the week—rest undisturbed by any correspondence, however urgent, or interview however pressing. In fact, he should be persuaded to leave his place of work for some place of quiet rest (as, e.g., the Vicsroy goes to Marhobra or the Prime Minister goes to Chequers ! !).

(2) That he takes one month's quiet rest (of the kind described in the para above) during the year.

I do not know why this should be impossible. I, I know, cannot do it, but three friends like you (Vallabhbhai, Jamnalalji and you combined) could do it. If he takes vows of all kinds, why not a most necessary vow of rest, which alone can ensure good, solid, concentrated work? Don't you agree?

Yes, I understand all that you say about the strike. And yet, you go into raptures over Satyavati and Farid! (pardon me but that's one of your weaknesses). However we shall hear all about it from you in Delhi. Let me tell you that I have placed none of your letter before him, during last week. You do not mind it I hope.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

## 126

### Report about Bapu's Health

December 13, 1935

I am thankful to be able to report that Bapu's condition this morning after a good night and a restful day yesterday shows distinct improvement. The blood pressure has come down to what is more or less his normal, the pulse is stronger and the general appearance better than it has so far been. As soon as he found that high pressure was persisting he cut out milk and vegetable from his diet (soyabeans had gone long before) and confined himself to fruit, honey and cane juice. Pure glucose was added on to this on the advice of Dr. Jivraj Mehta. This however is a low diet and naturally confines him to bed. But he refuses to fret and is taking this breakdown as Nature's gentle warning to go slow.

He may try a little mild tomorrow if the pressure remains as today. There is, however, no doubt that he will require at least a month's quiet and rest to restore him to normal health.

There is no truth in the report that Bapu is being persuaded to go to Bombay for change and rest. Shifting to the Ashram about two miles from here was contemplated but even that is now not considered necessary as progress during the last two days has been satisfactory. A small tent has been put up on the roof and Bapu spends the whole day and night under the tent in perfect quietness.

Mahadev Desai



127

*Copy*

December 13, 1935

MAHADEVBHAI  
CARE MAHATMA GANDHI  
WARDHA

MUCH ANXIOUS BAPU'S HEALTH. STRONGLY SUGGEST IF FIT FOR  
JOURNEY STAYING DELHI WILL GUARANTEE COMPLETE REST.  
CLIMATE WONDERFUL. PLEASE WIRE DAILY REPORT.

BIRLA

128

WARDHA,  
December 13, 1935

BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE, ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

PRESSURE APPRECIABLY LOWER. BAPU VERY MUCH BETTER.  
ABSOLUTELY NO ANXIETY.

MAHADEV

129

December 19, 1935

DEAR MR. PINNELL,

I beg to draw the attention of His Excellency to paragraphs 9 and 27 on pages 5 and 10 respectively of the 1st part of the Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1933-34. Both these paragraphs deal with the activities of the Harijans since the

Sangh, a body working for the uplift of the Harijans since the historic fast of Mr. Gandhi; of which I happen to be president.

I feel that gross injustice has been done to the Harijan Sevak Sangh in the paragraphs in question. This Sangh is a purely humanitarian body having nothing to do with politics. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was never authorised to collect funds for the Harijan Sevak Sangh, nor to my knowledge did he ever make an attempt to do so. I do not agree with Pandit Jawaharlal's political views, but I cannot convince myself of his collecting money under the guise of Harijan work. He is not irresponsible and dishonest. I fear the Government has been misinformed with the object of discrediting the Harijan Sevak Sangh. His Excellency knows me personally and I am sure that he would believe me when I say that our Sangh is a purely non-political body, devoted entirely to the cause of the depressed classes and as such should have deserved better treatment in the Report under question. In paragraph 27, it is said that "Mr. Gandhi's visit to Calcutta marks the end of the Harijan campaign of which little has been heard since." The accounts of the Harijan Sevak Sangh are regularly audited by Registered Accountants and the report and audited accounts are published every year. The reports are given great prominence in the Press and it is deplorable that the author of the report should have been so ignorant of the activities of the Sangh.

While I am sending by separate post the last reports of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, I may briefly state that in the years 1933-34 and 1934-35 we have spent about Rs. 3,37,000 per year or Rs. 6,74,000 for the two years. Of this total Rs. 4,36,831 has been spent on education, Rs. 18,809 on sanitation and water supply. Over 500 College and High School monthly scholarships have been given each year, 909 primary schools have been maintained and 75 free hostels established. In Bengal we have spent about Rs. 41,000 during the last 12 months. The accounts are open to scrutiny and I would welcome any Government representative doubting our bona-fides to satisfy himself on these points by scrutinizing our accounts.

As a gross injustice has been done to the Sangh, I as its president, write this to draw the attention of His Excellency and seek justice.

Since I was asked by the Sangh to write on this matter, I find that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru himself has issued a statement on the subject. Someone has badly blundered in this matter. A mistake is a mistake and it is always desirable to admit it. I have no doubt the prestige of the Government of Bengal will be enhanced immensely by their recognising the same.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

L.G. PINNELL, ESQ.

M.C., I.C.S.

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR OF BENGAL

CALCUTTA

## 130

*Copy*

December 21, 1935

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

Thanks for your letter of the 26th November.

I hope you are better now. I myself had to go through a tonsil operation and it was anything but a pleasant experience. I am glad Your Lordship has got the tonsil removed. Delhi is not a very good place for those who suffer from them.

I dare say you are keeping yourself well informed about the Indian affairs. If you so desire, I may send you Press cuttings from time to time.

The communal question is getting worse from day to day without any sign of improvement. For the situation to calm down, the Hindus in Mohammedan provinces, and vice versa have to realise that the majority rule must prevail. Peace will come only when that is realised, through conviction or compulsion. The sooner they realise or are made to realise this, the better for all. Being a Hindu myself, I add with some hesitation that there is a general impression throughout the country that the British in India as well as abroad will always stand by the Mohammedans



however unreasonable their actions or attitude may be. At Karachi and at Lahore this impression has received a shock, but it is there all the same. I am not a communalist but in spite of my best efforts I myself have not succeeded in shaking off the feeling. Maybe I too am a victim of the atmosphere. In any case, it is clear Your Lordship will have a strenuous time in India. I am not a pessimist. Once we start facing difficulties I believe remedies would be found.

I was sorry to read of Sir Samuel Hoare's resignation. Evidently the situation is getting more complicated.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE LORD LINLITHGOW  
29 CHESHAM PLACE  
LONDON S.W. 1

## 131

December 21, 1935

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

The enclosed cutting will interest you. I was rather perturbed at this, because publicity are such delicate matters as sometimes tend to defeat the object. I made investigations and found that the Pressman had seen a certain letter written by some big man in England to another big man in India. The Pressman would not disclose the name but evidently he got access to the Government of India files. I am writing this just for your information.

Your speech in the House of Lords was marvellous but the situation seems to have grown more complicated. I am sorry for Sir Samuel Hoare. I hope it will only mean an interruption in his public career.

Do you think the European situation is likely to cause in

India any anxiety? God forbid that England should get involved in any war.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
SAYMOUR HOUSE  
17 WATERLOO PLACE  
LONDON S.W. 1

132

D. O. 3894  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
CALCUTTA,  
December 23, 1935

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

With reference to your letter of the 19th instant, which has been placed before His Excellency, I am desirous to say that the matter has already received his very careful consideration in connection with the disclaimer issued in England by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. As regards the Harijan Sevak Sangh I am to make it clear that the statement in the Administration Report was not in any way intended as a reflection on the activities of that body or on the Harijan Movement itself, but was concerned only with the possibilities of that movement being exploited for subversive purpose. If you study the speech of Pandit Nehru, delivered at the Albert Hall on the 18th January, 1934, you will see that he has emphasised his point of view that the conflict with the Government would become inevitable, if Harijan movement was started with great force. You will perhaps agree that it was not unreasonable to interpret that speech as meaning that the Pandit himself regarded the movement from his point of view as one possessing real potentialities as a factor in furthering

the revolutionary policy which his speech was devoted to advocating. His Excellency fully accepts what you say regarding the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh for which you are responsible and it is perhaps hardly necessary to assure you that the movement for improving the condition of the depressed classes is one with which, in itself, Government have every sympathy.

*Yours sincerely,*

L.G. Pinnell

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.

133

December 23, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Please keep me in touch with Bapu's health.

I met Sir James Grigg at my house and Sir Henry Craik at his house. Evidently they have not been kept in touch with what I was doing in London.

Mr. Vinayak Mehta, I.C.S., Revenue Member, Kashmir State, who is staying with me, was telling me that on account of fixing of minimum wage by the A.I.S.A. the Kashmir cloth is finding it difficult to compete with Lalimli and Dhariwal. He said Gandhiji had made a great mistake in fixing this minimum wage for khadi as this will ruin the entire khadi trade of Kashmir. There seems to be a lot in what he says. He was bitterly complaining about the Congress attitude towards Hindus.

*Yours sincerely,*

Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.

C/O MAHATMA GANDHIJI

WARDHA



134

December 25, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Local Congressmen approached me for subscription towards the Jubilee celebrations but I have not paid them anything. I had no enthusiasm to pay to men with whom I do not agree. I have therefore decided to put 1,000 rupees at the disposal of Bapu. He may make any good use of the money, for Delhi preferably. There is the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Krishna Nayar's work and Dr. Sukhdeo's village work. Please don't trouble Bapu about all these details. This is just for your information.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
C/O MAHATMA GANDHIJI  
WARDHA

135

December 29, 1935

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The enclosure is a copy of the correspondence that passed between me and the Governor of Bengal on the question of the Administration Report which referred to the Harijan movement. Bapu knows the subject-matter. The Secretary's letter, though very cordial, has evaded the issue. Evidently it has been realised by the Governor that a blunder has been experiencing difficulty in retracing the step. I have not will to take up the question with him in personal conversation. From the point of view purely of the 'Harijan Sevak Sangh the letter is not unsatisfactory but amends have to be made publicly in fairness to Jawaharlalji. I hope they may do something. I am writing at letter to the Secretary of formal thanks and suggesting that

amends be made. If Bapu can bear the strain, please just acquaint him with the contents of the correspondence.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

## Letters without Date

136

DR. SUSHILA NAYAR  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

HAVE REACHED HERE. PLEASE WIRE BAPU'S HEALTH. HOPE HIS LUNGS CLEAR. IF ADVISABLE HE SHOULD GO TO MILDER CLIMATE LIKE BOMBAY. ALSO FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. IMPRESS NECESSITY TAKING MORE SCIENTIFIC TREATMENT.

GHANSHYAMDAS

137

### Note about Reforms (*Vide* Speeches of All Parties)

Englishmen in England generally believe that great powers have been transferred to Indians under the new scheme.

(1) I have met personally many of them and found that the feeling is sincere.

(2) The Bill, on the other hand, shows that every bit of conceivable power has been reserved for Governor-General and Governor. Explain by Chapter and verse.

(3) Is it possible to reconcile these two positions?

It is quite possible that Indians are looking only on the safeguards, whereas Englishmen are looking to the future working of the reforms. Englishmen probably are looking to the safeguards only as a sort of Insurance against risk, but it is better that we analyse the situation in greater detail.

(4) What should be the criterion on self-government? Let me put down the following points as criteria of any responsible Government:



- (a) That we should be able to foster, promote and protect Industries, Shipping, Banking and Insurance. Protect them against foreign competition—English as well as others.
- (b) That we should be able to use credit and currency in the best national interest. If we cannot, will our handicaps be anything different from the handicaps of the other Government in the world, say, for instance, England and France, where the issue banks have refused to help the Government? How far can constitution of Reserve Bank help us?
- (c) That we should be able to run Railways in national interests, Indianize the services, give contracts and purchase stores to and from Indians.
- (d) That we should have control on Military. How shall we be able to achieve full control and how shall we be able to Indianize military and when? The same remarks apply to our Navy and Air Force. Could we make necessary retrenchment for the present extravagance of our administration?
- (e) We should have power to lay down a recovery programme, as they are doing in every country just now, with a view to even distribution of wealth, better arrangement for sanitation, physical culture, education etc., and with that view shall we be able to re-adjust taxes assuring fair distribution of wealth by re-adjustment of taxes? Shall we be able to give licence for arms more freely than we can do at present?
- (f) That we should have control over our servants, but I think they are very good points to test the efficacy of the new reforms and we shall take the things on and show what handicaps are imposed in the Bill, how we are to overcome them and whether eventually we shall succeed, and if so how.

In analysing the position it should not be forgotten that we will not possess actual powers and yet we may be able to wield them through our influence. The English Mind is a constitutional mind. Safeguards there have to be, and there are, even in the English constitution. The only difference is that here is a

National Government whereas ours will be in the true sense. But, when the question arises, who is to wield the safeguards—if we do want safeguards, in any case? All these things have to be carefully analysed and considered.

Another question which has to be considered is how far the second chambers will defy the popular element. Is it possible that the Government would not be of the Congress but of the moderates since a Minister can be selected also from the second Chamber? Analyse the voting strength of the Congress and see only the province Congress is likely to come in majority. Also analyse the working of the Calcutta Corporation, which is worked entirely by popular elements. What are the safeguards? How have they been used? Have they been justified? Would there have been a chaos if there had been no safeguards?

## 138

### **Some Points about the Political Situation in India**

The Irwin-Gandhi Pact was great step towards binding India and Great Britain together. This created a precedent. It struck at the roots of the method of securing political advance by means of disorder, and substituted the method of mutual discussion and confidence. Its implications, however, were realised by few except the two authors. Hardly had the ink dried on the paper before both left the country; had they remained in India, the pact would have lived. Both the rank and file of Congress and Government circles misunderstood this pact from the beginning. Congressmen knew how to fight, but not how to compromise. Official circles never concealed their dislike of the 'agitator'—discussion with him amounted to lowering of prestige. The Pact, therefore, created disaffection amongst both on different grounds, and was given a burial by both at the first opportunity.

Then followed the second struggle and Ordinance rule. Congress was suppressed. A reaction against Gandhism followed.

$\hat{H}_2$  407 241 48154,

तुम्हारे सख रचना दिया न सो पढ़ता हूँ।  
 तुम्हारे निरवगुण का सपना नहीं मिलता  
 है। निरवगुणों की रचना भी नहीं हो पायी।  
 क्या कि रस? प्रतिदिन हास्य अहंता  
 और अहंता बढ़ती थी। इसी हास्य में  
 कुछ भी निरवगुण आये न था। तुम्हारे  
 रसों का निरवगुण आवश्यक् था। कभी  
 रस को निरवगुणों का अन्तर्गत कुछ  
 पद सदा न था वह मने पड़े रस में  
 तुम्हारे रसों का क्या अन्तर्गत होना था  
 ही नहीं कह सकता। हाँ रसों का  
 अन्तर्गत है कि वहाँ जो रस आते थे उसका  
 अन्तर्गत होना था, वहाँ जो कुछ होना था  
 उसका अन्तर्गत। ऐसा कहो मेरी हास्य  
 अहंता की थी। अहंता को भी न सख  
 कुछ होना है। निरवगुणों का अन्तर्गत नहीं



हैं लकरी. आमतो पुन जागत है कदा  
हूआ. इनका कहु जाहएलना न जात हूए  
वरकि न काहिली मे कहु आरि कि या  
वह लकका वर अ हूयुन था. जो मी 5 म  
लगात मेरा नगर मे चला था ही, आमतो  
अहून अहवाया है. हमारा मन न हू कलयन  
है. यही नो रूखी है

मया मुलाकत अत पड़े. होकी है  
इनका अहवा है कि हमारी बालि, मया  
है मन, हूना, हमारी परिक्रम, अहवा  
है लकका जो पर मविपन निरख है  
पुन कवरहै हो वह ही क है. पहाके अ  
काही वर एत हू कि पकरि. काहिली मे  
निलि पने कूठ बा 'पेडिवा' नही है. एत  
हू. एत एत है. एतका का अहवा पुनोवाका  
है. अंत मे, जाहू कि या है वह हू. एत  
नाना, हू. एत के मया मे एत अहवा हो  
अहवा है. २०११  
२८-८-२०११ का पुन अहवा है

This, unadulterated, stands for non-violence, truthfulness and conversion of the heart of Englishmen brought about by self-suffering. Hatred is supposed to have no place, though there was in fact plenty of it; for, Gandhism was never adopted, in its pure form, by the civil resisters. The radicals exploited it but had no faith in it. Their object was political freedom; the means was immaterial. 'Defeat' of the Congress thus created a new force with a different creed.

After the 'Fast Unto Death' and the Untouchability crusade, the situation crystallised. The radicals (doubting the efficacy of Gandhism) drifted towards the left, while another important section of opinion began to doubt the wisdom of boycotting the Legislatures. At this stage, Gandhiji realised that "Parliamentary mentality had come to stay"; also that violence had crept into Congress ranks under the guise of non-violence. He therefore withdrew civil resistance and set himself to the task of the reform of Congress by concentrating on the eradication of social, religious and economic evils in connection with Harijan and village work. Gandhiji has always believed that swaraj would come from within—not from without. Realising that his views could be imposed, but might not be assimilated, Gandhiji, rather than to enforce his views, retired from active membership of the Congress.

The dissolution of the Assembly gave the "Parliamentary mentality" group a fresh impetus. The radical element disapproved of the move believing that it would divert mass attention from the programme. But they could not resist. Elections took place and Congress were returned in large numbers to the Assembly. The spirit and speeches of Mr. Desai 'The Congress Leader in the Assembly' were appreciated by the Home Member—but the human touch' never came. The Government lost a good opportunity when it failed to recognise the unconscious attraction towards personal contact and mutual understanding. By the end of the session, the speeches of the opposition became more and more irresponsible. The failure of Congress M.L.A.s to sign the Viceroy's visiting book caused personal annoyance to His Excellency. The gulf widened; the radical element gathered strength. When the Congress Working Committee met at Jubbalpore recently this section (the Congress Socialist Party) openly revolted against the Parliamentarians when the work of the Assembly



was under review. Many radical resolutions were presented and a nominal victory secured; the situation was saved only by the tact and wisdom of the right wing—particularly of Mr. Rajagopalachari. The right wing Congressmen are thus fighting against two forces—the Government and the Socialists. The latter are making a direct attack by discrediting the leaders for having “achieved nothing”. The Government is helping indirectly the Socialists by ignoring the right wing; between the two the right wing is being crushed. The result may be either the retirement of the right wingers, leaving the field free to the Socialists, or adoption of some extreme programme in respect of reforms in order to carry public opinion. This is the effect of the present atmosphere on the right wing of Congress. The effect on the Moslems of the present atmosphere is that they are led into a belief that their worst actions will be condoned. Recently a resolution was passed at a public meeting in Multan that a certain Hindu should die because he criticised the Prophet. The police immediately came to hear of it, but the Hindu was murdered before he could be saved; a dangerous situation likely to have far-reaching results. When the government takes drastic action as was taken in Karachi, there is serious reaction.

The Civil Service is also affected by the atmosphere. The attitude of mind that regards every popular movement with suspicion and opposition may result in grave trouble in the future. Constructive work in such an atmosphere becomes impossible; the Government is busy maintaining law and order—the people with resisting the Government.

And finally, the recent decision of the Government to disallow trusted Indian Leaders to visit Quetta has caused the deepest sentiment all over India and added a new factor to the already tense situation.

In this atmosphere the new constitution for India will be launched—with no personal contact, no mutual trust.

In England genuine sympathy and goodwill exists towards India. It is sincerely believed that the constitution is a real advance; that it will give great powers to Indians and ultimately lead India towards her goal. This sincerity is realised in England; India is unaware of it. There the proposals are looked upon as a retrograde step, for no Indian believes that any partnership could exist unless accompanied by mutual trust, friendliness and



personal contact. Indians are reading the Bill and interpreting it literally, see, for example, the tremendous powers reserved to the Viceroy and Governors. Only in a friendly atmosphere could they accept the explanation that every constitution contains some provision for a corrective authority.

If the new constitution is to work successfully to the advantage of both countries, it is imperative that something be done immediately to change the existing atmosphere. A new spirit must be created; the spirit that dominated the Irwin-Gandhi Pact must be restored.

Sensible Indian men and women realise their need of British help; they want British friendship. The question therefore is how to secure this, bearing in mind the Government's position and prestige on the one hand, and the position and self-respect of Indian people on the other.

With this view, I venture to make the following suggestions :

1. Establishment of personal contact should be the first step with a view to developing it and get some mutual understanding. To avoid embarrassment and unnecessary speculations the meeting should take place informally and on a non-political issue.
2. This contact should be developed. An effort should be made to get mutual understanding. If it is thought that success may not be achieved at Delhi, then a man like Sir John Anderson should tackle the questions.
3. If the finishing touch is to be given by the next Viceroy then the ground should be prepared in between the time so that the gulf may not widen meanwhile.
4. As the best atmosphere is to be found in England, is it possible to get Mr. Gandhi on some other mission to England? He was invited in 1929, I think, either by some Church people or by some University.
5. Is it possible for the Secretary of State or the next Viceroy to go to India next winter as the head of some of the Commissions likely to go there?
6. Over and above, is it possible to exchange views through a third person with a view to making suitable declarations from both sides? In that case, personal contact would follow after the declarations are made.

BIRLA HOUSE,  
LALGHAT,  
BENARES

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I hope Bapu has seen a copy of the letter written by Thakkar Bapa to Rajaji regarding conversation and breaking of Hindu shrine and transforming it into a Roman Catholic Church. I need not make any comment because I fear it is impossible to write with restrained feeling on this matter. I do not know if there is any law under which we could prosecute the Missionary concerned for breaking the Hindu temple. A Hindu temple belongs to Hindus and if the villagers have become Christians, I do not know whether they would still retain any right in that temple even though it may have been built by them. If it was illegal on the part of the missionary concerned, then I do not see any reason why he should not be prosecuted. I am sure that the Christians themselves would feel ashamed of the Padre. In any case, something has to be done to protect Hinduism against such attacks on the part of the irresponsible Christians. If the matter is not taken up with proper zeal, we would be simply encouraging repetition of such things which is not also in the interests of the Christians themselves. I hope Bapu would take up the question in the *Harijan*. Once the public knows the things, it would create a sensation and Hindus I fear will feel great provocation. But it could not be helped. The thing itself is un-Christian and I hope Bapu would tackle the matter as he thinks best.

Herewith copy of a letter from Sir George Schuster. The letter is really nice and sincere. If I get his letter addressed to Bapu, I will send the same to him.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

Encl. 1

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

1936





WARDHA,  
January 1, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I owe you a number of letters, but you will kindly bear with me. My hands are overfull and Bapu's breakdown has made them fuller than ever.

I note your action about the jubilee donation. It is just like you. You will discuss it with Bapu in Delhi.

What you say about Vinayak Mehta, I can understand as I know his views. But there is no force in what he says either about the khadi position or the Congress attitude towards Hindus. If the minimum wage is to succeed the khadi trade will have to suffer a partial setback in the earlier stages. The Congress attitude you know better than I can explain. His attitude is very nearly similar to the Mahasabha attitude.

I have not at all liked the contents of your letter, of the 29th. Bapu has a good deal to say about them, but it is hardly possible or necessary to say it today. More about it when we meet.

We leave on the 3rd for Ahmedabad and are there until the 26th. We return here on the 28th and come to Delhi in February. I do not know why Bapu must return here for a couple of days, but there is no moving him from a decision once he has taken it. His blood pressure is still the same—there is just a slight drop in the systolic pressure—and the doctor thinks he must have more rest. It is likely that it will take a long time before it gets back to normal. I for my part am sparing no pains to lessen his work, but what can be my contribution after all? There are things which he alone can do and must do to fulfil the law of his being. It is no use trying to save him from it.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

2

*Copy*

January 6, 1936

MAHADEVBHAI  
CARE MAHATMAJI  
WARDHA

HOW IS BAPU?

GHANSHYAMDAS

3

WARDHA,  
January 7, 1936

SETH GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
PILANI

PRESSURE CONTINUES ALARMINGLY HIGH IN SPITE UNDISTURBED  
REST.

MAHADEV

4

January 8, 1935

MAHADEVBHAI  
WARDHA

PLEASE KEEP ME INFORMED. AM NOT COMING TO DISTURB BUT WIRE  
IF REQUIRED.

GHANSHYAMDAS



5

January 12, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I came here only yesterday from Pilani and though I had wired Jamnalalji to talk to me on phone I did not get him. This probably means that he did not get my telegram in time.

I am very much relieved that Bapu is again on the path of recovery. To tell you frankly, I had serious anxiety about his health and although he is showing signs of improvement, I am not yet fully reassured. We will all thank God if he comes out of this crisis without any harm to his health. I also hope that once he is fully recovered, he will pay more attention to the question of rest.

In your last letter, you said that you did not like the contents of my letter by which probably you meant not my letter to the Governor but his reply to me. I had no doubt in my mind that the Governor being an honest man he would make amends and as you have seen, he has already done so. I hope now you agree with me.

Please keep me well informed about Bapu's health. I am not coming to Wardha because this would not in any way help Bapu's health. But I should very much like to be near him and so I hope you will keep me well informed about his recovery.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

6

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
January 13, 1936

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I was in my village in the interior of Rajputana when the statement, about the reference to Jawaharlal in the Administra-

tion Report, appeared in the Press and on returning to Delhi, I take the earliest opportunity to congratulate Your Excellency on the step taken.

Unfortunately, I have noticed a tendency in official circles to obstinately refuse admission of a mistake once it is committed and as such an admission, in their opinion, may lower the prestige of the Government. On the other hand, I noted a deep rooted impression among Indians that one should not expect fair play and justice from the Government once it has set its feet on the wrong track. In my opinion, such a position has definitely weakened the prestige of the Government in the past, a fact rarely realised. Your Excellency therefore in taking this step has acted boldly and without the slightest doubt has immensely enhanced the prestige of the Government. My contention is amply proved by the contents of the Indian owned Press.

Such actions though trivial in relation to wider politics in their aggregate go a great deal to pave the way for better understanding which is so essential just now. During the last few years, I have not come across many instances where the Government have acted courageously in such case and therefore I could not resist an inclination to write.

With kindest regards,

*I beg to remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas Birla*

H.E. COL. THE RT. HON'BLE  
SIR JOHN ANDERSON  
P.C., G.C.E., G.C.I.E.  
GOVERNOR OF BENGAL, CALCATTA

7

WARDHA,  
January 14, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have not been able to write to you for some days and I thought my telegrams to *The Hindustan Times* would be enough.

But I had better write in detail now. The high blood pressure puzzled everyone, including the doctors. There were certain factors which we imagined might have contributed to the rise, but no one could say why it persisted. The removal of the teeth eliminated at least one of the obvious, the physical causes, and had that much to do with relieving the pressure. There was some difference in the diagnosis too as arrived ably by the doctors here and by those in Bombay. The local doctors attributed it to a slight dilation of the heart and therefore ruled out physical exertion of every kind, confining him all the twenty-four hours in bed. The Bombay doctors are convinced that his heart is sound as a bell and want Bapu to take at least some physical exercise. That would help to take some more nourishment too. He has again begun to take some milk and a little bit of a stroll in the room.

Then in order to overhaul him completely the Bombay doctors thought he must be taken to Bombay where alone a thorough examination of the urea, blood, sugar and kidney's can be done. There are three more teeth and two or three slumps of old teeth. These too will have to go. They will be removed in Bombay. Then perhaps he will go to Ahmedabad. He will have some change there. The collections have already been done. So there is no worry on that score and Gujarat will have the satisfaction of his presence there for some time. The weather there is quite mild these days. We have not yet been able to decide about Delhi. Bapu thinks he will be able to go to Delhi by the middle of February but he has left it entirely in the hands of doctors.

There is no anxiety now. The persistent pressure gave us all an anxious time but it is now nothing like what it was ten days ago and there is distinct and steady improvement. He is as cheerful as ever, if not more, and takes things as easily as we should expect him too, not worrying about anything and taking as much rest as we can give him. You may be sure that if there was any cause for I should wire to you at once.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev



WARDHA,  
January 15, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I wrote to you yesterday in detail about Bapu's health. There is nothing to add today. He is looking brighter today, but there is no mistaking the fact that he needs any amount of rest. He sleeps for three hours, sometimes even four hours on end, especially when he is silent, and that shows that he needs both rest and silence for almost an indefinite period. I wonder if he could not be moved right out of the country for a little while—not to any other country, but just out on the sea for a month or at least a fortnight! He looks well and bright and cheerful, his absolutely toothless smile is even richer than ever and yet he said to me in so many words: "I dread anyone coming near me, lest I should have to speak to him, and the mere physical act of speaking tires me out." That is serious enough warning for all of us.

Your letter of the 12th January. Frankly I disliked both the letters! And so did Bapu. But it is worthwhile discussing it in a letter. We shall talk about it. Unvarnished amends would have been perfectly graceful. The explanation was stupid and made matters worse for Government. But perhaps you will say that something is better than nothing. I do not.

I wish you did write about work in Pilani. I want you to write for *Harijan* too whenever you can. You can leave the language to me. And do tell me all the amusing stories about Dinkar. They will serve to beguile the monotony of my dull routine and anxious time.

By the bye, I have had an absorbingly interesting correspondence with Jawaharlal about a little conversation between you and Bapu that I happened to report in the *Harijan*, as also about Bapu's article on Abyssinia. When the young man who assists me is less busy I shall ask him to type J.'s letter and my reply to him for you. I should then like to have your reaction to it.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* You had better address your letters now to 89, Warden Road, Bombay. We are moving Bapu to Bombay tomorrow and he will have to stay there for at least four or five days.

9

29 CHESHAM PLACE, SW 1,  
January 16, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I owe you a letter in answer to yours of 21st December, and for the entertaining cuttings you were good enough to send me. I am provided by the India Office with a good many extracts from newspapers, but I shall always be glad to receive from you anything that appears to you to be of peculiar interest or importance.

I am interested in what you tell me of communal matters. I can say with complete conviction that I do not myself feel the slightest prejudice, one way or the other, as between Hindu and Mohammedan. Don't you think your own difficulty in that respect is probably due to training in early years, when the mind is as sensitive and as retentive as a photographic plate? In quite another field I can recall my nurse telling me that Jews were evil people because they disbelieved in Christ and killed Him: it took me many years of experience and effort to rid myself of a dislike of persons of that race. Yet what could be more unfair or more illiberal than to dislike someone because, by the accident of birth, they happen to be of different religious faith from one's own.

I have been truly sorry to learn of Mr. Gandhi's ill health. But I hope the removal of the teeth may give him required relief. Teeth may be the cause of almost any bodily ill. But it is hard to have to bear the strain of extractions when so unwell.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
January 17, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your letter. It did not relieve me much. This time the serious feature about Bapu's health is that he is not fully responding to the rest or to treatment. I am glad that he is continuing to take rest. Please tell Sardar and also Bapu that unless he is absolutely fit, he need not come to Delhi at all. Of course, Delhi climate is very good and if he comes, he should come only for rest and nothing else. In that case, Sardar should accompany him. On the other hand, if Ahmedabad is found to be beneficial to his health, he need not make any change. Sardar has asked me to come to Ahmedabad some time when Bapu is there. I have to visit the Sabarmati Ashram also once as its trustee but I will fix up my programme after some time. If Bapu does not come here, I will pass February in Calcutta.

I note that you did not like both the letters nor did Bapu like them. I should love to have your criticism about my letter. If it was put in a language which did not find favour with you, I think it is the fault of my mentality. Had I expressed in somewhat different way, probably I would have expressed not my views but some one else's views. So the criticism is not of the letter but of my own thoughts and I would love to hear from you what you objected to. I want this for my own guidance.

As regards the Governor's reply, I don't agree with you. Why should you expect too little from our own men and too much from our opponents? Please don't misunderstand me if I put forward a small analogy. Take the case of the *National Call*. It has abused me for the last three years, in season and out of season, without a tiny little finger being raised by Dr. Ansari or Rajendra Babu. You may say, and I would agree with you, that poor Rajendra Babu is a saint but when you talk of justice, you cannot make allowance for anyone's saintliness. The Governor at least got the contents expunged but in this case at least one of the Directors thinks it is not his duty to even go into the matter. By writing all this, I am not making any complaint against anyone. You know my regards for Rajendra



Babu. My main object in reminding this analogy is that we should take human nature as it is and just as we should make allowance for the directors of the *National Call*, so should we for the Governor of Bengal. But I am more eager to have your criticism about my own letter or rather about my own mentality.

About Pilani, I don't want to write anything in the *Harijan*. It would be sheer advertisement for nothing as the whole work is in an experimental stage. We decided last year that every boy in the School and the College—and there are 800 boys in all—must drink milk, half a seer per day. It was also decided that those who could not afford to pay should be given free. The problem arose as to how to provide the milk and Pandya in spite of his best efforts could not get more than 20 cows. Even they were not all good breed. The villagers call him “Kheti Master” and when Pandya brought old cows from Rohtak and Hissar Districts, they cut jokes at his expense. And the milk problem remained unsolved. On the other hand, in the village itself, you can get good milk at the rate of 26 pounds per rupee. So Pandya was asked to buy milk and provide the same to the boys until we had sufficient cows. This has upset Pandya. To purchase nearly 6 hwt of milk, boil it and then sell it to the boys is a problem as big for him as one of my big mills. His discomfiture is something comic. But the boys now have begun to get milk and we hope that within the next 10 days, everyone will be drinking milk.

We have every 6 months medical examination and the effect of scientific regulation of diet will be worth noticing. Spices have been prohibited in the kitchen, and we are considering now controlling the kitchen instead of allowing it to the boys to make their own arrangement. We may even open a class for cooking.

The Harijan Hostel is progressing and one boy who is reading in the upper classes has been brought to live in the larger hostel where caste Hindu boys reside. The Harijan boy has been taken without the slightest objection from other boys.

We have got now about 150 sheep. The four Australian sheep gave birth to two lambs and further two are to be born shortly. Thus we shall have about 10 Australian animals in the near future. The Australian rams were mated with some Bika-

neri sheep and a cross breed is produced. But Pandya did not keep correct record of the quantity of wool produced per each sheep and so we could not make a proper comparison of the Australian sheep with the Bikaner and the Hissar deal.

From the financial point of view, the dairy has not been a failure. If we don't take the depreciation into account, we have lost nothing. We sell milk at the rate of 3 pice per lb. and on this basis the income and expense per cow comes to about 10 rupees. If we don't take depreciation into account, we also don't take into account the new production.

The Holstein bull that I brought from England has begun mating. It is a fine animal and is the talk of the village. Lord Linlithgow told me in England that from the point of view of milk, Holstein breed would be quite a success and so I am making this experiment. Sahebji Maharaj<sup>1</sup> also supports this view. Parmeshwari Prasad is against it and Pandya has got no special view about this breed.

In the agricultural experiment, we lost about 1,500 rupees last year. We have discovered that we lose Rs. 4 per bigha in agriculture and so have decided to leave this line alone. Only 50 bighas would be cultivated for producing good seeds.

We are running following departments in handi-crafts: Carpentry, Cap-making, Leather Work, Blanket Weaving, Carpet Weaving, Dyeing and Printing and Bleaching. To this, we are adding this year also Tailoring, Masonary, Book Binding, Toy Making and Apiculture. We propose to take also Poultry Farming after some time. We have decided that from the next session, every boy from the lowest class to the Intermediate classes must take any one or two of the above subjects and devote at least 3 periods a week so that when the Intermediate boy leaves the college, he will know at least one or two of the above subjects thoroughly. This will also make the industrial department self-paying as we shall get free labour from the students.

Our expenses just now amount to 80,000 rupees. This is rather heavy as you may say but if you want to give good education to 800 boys, in my opinion, Rs. 100 per head is not too much. In course of time, we may begin to get fees from the boys and that may help us to some extent. The physique of the boys is

<sup>1</sup>President, Radhaswami Sect, Dayalbagh, Agra



fine. Four things are compulsory : Mass prayer, Mass exercise and sport, Milk drinking and Swadhyaya of the selected books. But in spite of this, the boys though physically very good and the examination results also very satisfactory, I cannot say how far they are superior in character to the boys from other colleges. Some students tell me that in many colleges in big towns boys get addicted to drink whereas in our village the only drink is either water or milk.

Besides the college, school and the girl school, we are just now running 15 village schools and we are increasing the number to 20 next year. For the village schools, we have decided this year that the teachers should take it upon themselves to plant fruit trees in every home. I am sending about 2,000 orange plants this spring from Delhi. Oranges thrive very well in Rajputana. They were unknown 15 years back but we were the first to make experiments and about 2,000 plants have been grown in garden out of which 200 gave fruits this year. It will be a sight worth seeing if we could put one tree for every home in a radius of 50 miles.

Please give my pranams to Sardar. I just had his letter and am not replying to him separately. I thought this will do.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
BOMBAY

## 11

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
January 17, 1936

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

The enclosed cutting would interest Your Lordship. Most of the signatories belong either to the socialist group in the Congress or to its left wing. The strenuous propaganda that the



left-wingers have been carrying on may make Mr. Gandhi's task in the Congress rather difficult. His health is bad just now which is causing us a great anxiety. If he is fit to attend the Congress in April, and I hope by that time he will fully recover, he would undoubtedly carry the majority with him. But the possibility of the present left-wing minority in the Congress becoming a majority at some date cannot be ignored. Most of these left-wingers are young men whereas the right wing leaders are mostly old.

The Government of Bengal disclaimer about the allegations made against Jawaharlal in the Annual Administration Report has been a very wise and straightforward step. Admission of a mistake by the Government immensely enhances its reputation instead of lowering it as is generally believed in a section of the official world. It had a good effect all round and I am glad that Jawaharlal too appreciated it. He is going to London by the end of this month and I am glad that Lord Lothian is meeting him. I know him well, though not intimately, but those who know him intimately tell me that though extremist, he is a realist. I hope Lord Lothian would be able to impress on him the point that there was plenty of goodwill in England which could help India to achieve her legitimate aspiration without resorting to direct action. I dare say Your Lordship has already read this another news about the formation of the "East Asiatic Block". I attach great significance to this. The Pakistan dream is one cherished by ambitious Mohammedan leaders in India with great vehemence.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE MARQUESS OF LINLITHGOW  
29 CHESHAM PLACE  
LONDON, S. W. 1

12

*Unrevised*

GUJARAT VIDYAPITH,  
AHMEDABAD,  
January 24, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your long letter was a delight. I am sorry I have not been able to reach earlier than today.

First as regards Bapu he is really well now. The blood pressure is not yet normal, but it is very near it. He is growing daily from strength to strength and as he himself told me this morning, whereas he kept his mind blank all these days in Wardha and Bombay in deference to the wishes of the doctors, he did not feel like doing so, as he felt no longer the strain of thinking about things! Of course he realises that he must hasten slowly and so he will consent to having complete rest for four more weeks. But so far as he himself is concerned he will now no longer keep his mind a "blank" as he put it, and will think and ask to know about things. We, of course, will not worry him.

He thinks he need not stay in Ahmedabad beyond the 6th of February, though of course the Sardar is loath to let him go as early as that. The doctors who examined the urine and blood etc., found the latter deficient, and have hence recommended a change in the diet which must be given a trial for at least three weeks. I should have thought that he should stay here at least until the 15th February but now that he finds strength steadily coming in he has begun to fret. I do not know what you think about the whole thing. What is your programme going to be under these circumstances? Please let me know.

The very full details of work at Pilani made my mouth almost water to go to Pilani for a holiday! But I do not know when if ever I am going to get a holiday. I should like to publish some of the details, but I can't do so without in some way bringing in Pilani or you, and I do not want either to be abused by myself or have abuse showered on you. Do you know that because I have often written in detail about Miraben's work in the villages, I have been accused of "boosting" Miraben and *Daily Herald* sent a cable to its correspondent to inquire if

the report that Miss Slade has been secretly married to Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's Secretary, was true!! Well, that is bad enough, and too untrue to be believed. But everyone would believe a report that I was being paid by Birla in some shape or other!! Don't you think so?

A line about your letter. I thought it was too apologetic which it need not have been. You have a certain dignified strength about you which I missed in this particular letter. That's all, and as regards the Bengal Government's reply to you as also their communique, their only merit is truthfulness, though the explanation makes them look utterly stupid no doubt.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

13

CARE LUCKY  
BIRLA HOUSE  
LALGHAT  
BENARES  
January 25, 1936

VALLABHBHAI PATEL  
GUJARAT VIDYAPITH  
AHMEDABAD

WHEN BAPU EXPECTED DELHI? WIRE HIS HEALTH.

GHANSHYAMDAS



14

January 30, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your long letter.

No one would believe that Mahadevbhai was being financed by Birla to boost him but as I wrote in my last letter, I myself don't like any advertisement because the whole thing is at an experimental stage and it would be presumptuous on my part to claim to have done anything when nothing has been done. At the proper time, if necessary, I will advertise the things myself but that stage would reach probably after many many years.

I am glad to hear that Bapu is well. He need not disturb his rest but I would like to know his programme so that I may frame my own.

As regards my letter to the Governor, we shall talk more when we meet. Still, I don't agree with you but at least I am glad that I have your opinion and you know how much I value it. No, I will have to convince you about my point.

Jawaharlal's speeches in London have not been so bad as I had expected. I was surprised when he said that Japan was weakening power and Russia was the best friend of India. I don't know about Russia but I know definitely enough that Japan is not a weakening power.

Please give my pranams to Vallabhbhai.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
AHMEDABAD

15

18 CADOGAN GARDENS,  
S. W. 3,  
February 4, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I am exceedingly grateful to you for your kind letter. It is worth going through in these times of trial as it has shown me

how many good friends I have. I am much interested to hear what you say of Mr. Gandhi. Please remember me to him and say with what pleasure I look back to our talks in London.

*Yours,*  
Samuel Hoare

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.

16

SEYMOUR HOUSE,  
17 WATERLOO PLACE,  
S. W. 1,  
February 17, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I have just got back from the United States to find a case of tea from yourself in my office. It is most kind of you to have sent me this and when I have the pleasure of drinking some of it I shall remember our many friendly interviews. I have just had a long talk with Jawaharlal Nehru. I have never met him before. He seems a most attractive and intelligent person. I was glad to hear from him that Mr. Gandhi is now once more well on the road to health. I had read in the American papers that he had been seriously ill.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Lothian

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

17

WARDHA,  
February 19, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The entire correspondence sent by Jajuji that duly arrived here, was gone through and destroyed immediately thereafter. Bapu made no comment; else I would have written to you.

This is only about a minor matter. Bapuji wants me to enquire from you about the three constituents of the remedy for chilblain. He remembers just two of them: Shellac and wax. The third one he has forgotten. Is it turnip by any chance? If that be so, turnips start smelling bad after two or three days.

Miss Roydon's Guild House speech was just marvellous. She has made full use of her conversation with Bapuji. It has appeared in the *Free Press Journal* of the 17th. Do make it a point to read it.

Yours sincerely,  
Mahadev

18

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
February 24, 1936

BROTHER GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your telegram addressed to Pyarelalji has just arrived. He has left for Nagpur today to consult a doctor about a patient. So I took the liberty of opening the telegram. As desired by you I am sending a copy on Bapuji's resolution, and I was much intrigued that there was not even a semblance of opposition in the working committee meeting. And I did not like Jawaharbhair's resolution at all.

Pujya Bapuji is quite well, His blood pressure is near



normal and he is looking quite cheerful.

I have been here for the last 15 days.

I hope this finds you and yours in the best of health.

*Your sister,*  
Amrit Kaur

## 19

CALCUTTA,  
February 24, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I had sent a letter of sympathy to Sir Samuel Hoare and in replying to the same and thanking me, he adds as follows :

“I am much interested to hear what you say of Mr. Gandhi. Please remember me to him and say with what pleasure I look back to our talks in London.”

I think he means his talks with Bapu and not with me. Lord Linlithgow has been writing to me off and on and whenever he writes, he adds something about Bapu. I did not worry you all this time about these things but as now Bapu is better, you may just pass this on to him.

I am looking forward to our meeting in Delhi.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

## 20

CALCUTTA,  
February 26, 1936

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

Thanks for Your Lordship's letter.

I fear I gave Your Lordship a wrong impression about

my own attitude towards the communal matters. It would be very wicked of me if I got to dislike anyone because of his birth in a community belonging to a different faith. In my family, there are Mohammedan servants serving for the last two generations. When I said, "even I in spite of my best efforts have not succeeded in shaking off the feeling", I was referring to the wide-spread notion among Hindus as well as Mohammedans that the British in India and abroad would stand by the Mohammedans, however unreasonable their attitude in some matters might be. I much appreciate your mild rebuke but I assure Your Lordship that I am not built mentally either on racial or communal lines.

I have come here for a few days but am going back to Delhi where Mr. Gandhi would be coming on the 15th of March. I am glad to say that he is now quite well. I hope to have many talks with him before he goes to Lucknow to attend the Congress. I also hope to meet Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which I hope may be useful. The Congress Session will be held in the second week of April a little before your arrival in this country.

I shall be in Delhi when Your Lordship comes there. But perhaps you would be staying there only for a short time and I dare say immediately on landing, you will be faced with many important problems. I fear you will have enough to worry about. I therefore intend not to encroach upon your time unless so desired by Your Lordship. I will put my humble services for what they are worth entirely at your disposal for the good cause that you have at heart and for which I have been working these last two years. But at the same time, I would not make Your Lordship feel that I was making myself a nuisance to you.

Need I say that the appointment of the Private Secretary from a free atmosphere was a very wise decision?

With kindest regards.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

RT. HON'BLE THE MARQUESS OF LINLITHGOW  
29 CHESHAM PLACE  
LONDON S.W. 1

21

WARDHA,  
February 28, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHAYAMDASJI,

I was in Calcutta for a couple of days (9th & 10th) but you were in Delhi then. I arrived in Delhi on the 12th and you left for Calcutta a few minutes before me !

I am not sure that "our talks" means his talks with Bapu, I am surprised, however, that he did not even acknowledge a letter that Bapu wrote to him a few months ago (before his resignation) inquiring about his health as the papers reported him to be very ill. It is likely that the letter did not reach him, or was not placed before him by some secretary as discreet or indiscreet act? ! We had planned to leave here for Delhi on the 8th, but there is every likelihood of Jawahar arriving here about that date—in which case the departure may have to be put off until the 12th or 13th.

Yes, Linlithgow sent a very kind message to Bapu—on hearing of Bapu's breakdown—through Agatha.

Bapu's pressure had come down to normal in Ahmedabad. On the day we left it was 150 and 90. But it has shot up again ! I am afraid his system has become extraordinarily sensitive. How do you like his article in the *Harijan*? If you have not seen it, ask some one to place your copy before you. It is quite likely you are not seeing it nowadays. This is the first article he has written after a silence of ten or eleven weeks.

Yours,  
Mahadev

22

February 28, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Please let me know Bapu's programme. I wish to leave this place about the 13th or 14th March for Delhi. I would have



left earlier but my nephew, that is my sister's son, has to undergo an operation for appendicitis and the doctors are going to do operation on the 5th. So I would leave the place just after he is better.

We hope Vallabhbhai is also coming with Bapu. Please let me know how long he proposes to stay in Delhi and what will be his programme after he leaves Delhi.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.  
WARDHA

## 23

### **Interview with Sir John Anderson**

(Time : 11 p.m.; lasted about 40 minutes)

February 29, 1936

I told him how Delhi was not kept informed by London and hence uneasiness. He admitted and said uneasiness was further increased by the appointment of the Private Secretary. He did not know Linlithgow personally but knew that he was a very capable man.

I said nice things about Jawaharlal and said that although he might be a fanatic socialist, but was not a visionary and was realist. The Governor said that he would keep an open mind and that he was glad that I thought so. The Governor was apprehensive about his ideology but I said, "Yes, but I hope that he would realise the necessity of going slow. His main desire is the uplift of the masses and he will never make any compromise about his ideal but I don't think he would be so rash about the method." He asked me what I thought about terrorism and communism. I replied, "Communism has very little chance in Bengal. It does not appeal to the Bengali mind but it would be different in Northern India." I said I was

rather apprehensive of the attitude of I.C.S.'s. More I come in their contact, the more I felt that they had no far-sight and that they were very snobbish and did not want to make things pleasant. He said, "They would adapt themselves to the time. They will not decide the policy. It will be decided by someone else. Whatever plans are made, they will adapt themselves to them." I said that I should like to see Sir James Grigg getting more discreet and he seemed to agree. Probably, he would write to him.

## 24

CALCUTTA,  
March 2, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Your letter has caused me anxiety. The papers had not reported that the blood pressure had gone up. I hope Bapu will continue to take full rest.

I have not yet seen the article because my *Harijan* goes to Delhi and then it will be redirected to Calcutta.

I met the Governor here day-before-yesterday and had a very good talk with him. But we shall talk about it in Delhi.

You have not sent to me what Jawaharlalji wrote to you about my conversation with Bapu, but you never got the time.

Kamala's death was a very sad affair. I have sent a cable to Jawaharlalji. I wonder he would not get a little more bitter on account of his bereavement. I was put this question by an important personality and I said that I did not think that his domestic trouble could influence his political decisions. I am very much sympathetic with Jawaharlalji in his loss.

Did Bapu get any reply to his condolence wire about the King's death?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.

25

SAWALI,  
March 5, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your kind letter. You must have had my telegram before this reaches you. We will reach Delhi definitely on the morning of the eight and I shall await your arrival on the 13th or 14th. You should not leave a moment earlier than you can.

I do hope you had by now a copy of the last *Harijan*. I could not send you a copy of Jawahar's letter to Bapu, about your conversation with the latter, owing to pressure of work. I shall show it to you in Delhi and also my reply.

Yes, Kamala's death is a tragedy. But it makes Jawahar's sacrifice all the more heroic and glorious. I suppose the crowning glory would be when he himself mounts the gallows some-day! Not inconceivable. He seems to me to be progressing from glory to glory.

Yes, the P.S.V. *did* acknowledge "with thanks" Bapu's telegram and said that it was forwarded to His Majesty.  
More when we meet,

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

26

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA,  
March 6, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I hope you will not mind this postcard. All my things have gone to the station and I am waiting here, as I have just received intimation that the train is late by an hour and a half. I have no writing material left, but a few postcards. Your two letters came to my hand last night when we arrived from Chanda, and I read them at about 11 p.m. They do not call for any



reply, except that if anything can keep Bapu in our midst, it is our own purity and silent prayer, and as I know that there are at least half a dozen pure speckless souls in Bapu's following, God will keep him yet and his shadow will ever grow more and more. For the rest we can talk to our heart's content there.

And now for a little bit of business. The Marwari Relief Society sends us honey regularly. As I do not want the next consignment to come here I have asked them to pass it on to you when you leave for Delhi. There is no hurry about it and perhaps it may be best for someone there to ring up Baijnathji Kedia and ask him to send the honey to you before you leave. The Gujarati article of Bapu that you liked better than the English one was written by me. I forgot to say underneath that it was translated from *Harijan*, but as it was a very free translation, I thought it was well that it went out as Bupu's own article.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev,

SHRI GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

27

29 CHESHAM PLACE,  
S.W.1,  
March 10, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

A hurried note to thank you for your letter of the 26th February. As you surmise, I shall only be in Delhi for a day or two in order to see round my new house.

Thank you very much for saying that you are prepared to help me if occasion should arise.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

28

LUCKNOW,  
March 30, 1936

MY DEAR PARASNATHJI,

Bapu was considerably pained to read the Governmentt Communique contradicting *H.T.* news about correspondence between Halifax and Bapu. I wonder how you can be led yourself to believe in extravagant stories of this character and how, what is much worse, allow them to be published. They add neither to your prestige (I mean the prestige of *H.T.*) nor serve the country's cause. On the contrary they do an incalculable amount of damage.

Bapu has issued a contradiction severely reprimanding you. We are here until the 3rd. May I have a line to say who was responsible for this most regrettable, and may I say, mischievous canard?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SJT. L. PARASNATHJI  
*Hindustan Times*  
BURN BASTION ROAD  
DELHI

29

LUCKNOW,  
March 30, 1926

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

As directed by Bapuji, I have written to Parasnathji. Herewith a copy of the letter. Bapu was considerably pained. This appears to be the handiwork of Chamanlal. This man can never prove to be an asset to the paper.

We are here till the 3rd. At Allahabad till the 7th. Back here by the 12th. Then on to Wardha.

I hope you are keeping quite fit. Sardar also has turned the corner.

Yours sincerely,  
Mahadev

30

April 2, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Please tell that immediately I saw the report in *The Hindustan Times*, I talked to Parasnathji on phone. Parasnathji himself felt more shocked than anyone else. When I left for Gwalior, I had asked Parasnathji to come early to Birla House and give company to Sir Purshottamdas, at dinner here, who was staying as my guest with the consequences which never anticipated. It is not Chamanlal. It was Salivatiswaran. But it is said that Salivatiswaran himself has been a tool in the hands of some interested parties who were very keen to see something like this appearing in the *Indian express*. I cannot say how far it is correct but Parasnathji suspects a sort of conspiracy. Madhavrao is reported to be at the back of all these things.

In any case, one thing is clear. Why should have these things been published in *The Hindustan Times* even though Parasnathji was absent? This requires a drastic change in the editorial staff. The staff should be made to realise that *The Hindustan Times* is not the paper for any sensational thing. It is a pretty hard task but Parasnathji fully agrees that this will have to be done.

Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
ALLAHABAD



31

ALLAHABAD,  
April 7, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I deeply appreciate your letter. I had anticipated you. I wrote to Parasnathji, before I had your letter, that the whole staff needed to be completely overhauled and that proper control should be established over every branch—including even the “cup of tea” and the advertisements. Salivati came here with Parasnathji’s note. He tried to see me twice, I went downstairs to hunt him out from the crowd that waited downstairs but failed to find him. Bapu was not at all inclined to hear him. But without having seen him I came to know the defence he had. It is a hallow defence, I assure you. But I shall try to see him at Lucknow. You know I was reading C. P. Scott’s life in Delhi. I finished the book there. It is one of the best biographies I have read, and it brings forcibly to one’s mind as nothing else does, what a saint a journalist has to be to perform his sacred function in the proper manner. And I am afraid not one per cent of our Press correspondents can stand the test—the inexorable test laid down in that book and which Scott fulfilled.

However that is neither here nor there. Why should I inflict the sermon on you? I had better inflict it on a Press correspondent and I know how futile it would be if I tried to do so.

The W. C. had a fairly critical session this time, but they have steered clear of the breakers. How long—I cannot say. Neither party seems to be happy over the result, but a few days should give us a clear indication. Bapu had a strenuous time, but he stood the strain well, and also, as usual, made himself felt. More than this, I need not say.

As it is the letter has become longer than I had expected—and what a selfish letter at that. Please pardon me.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Within half an hour we leave for Lucknow, and this is being scribbled off in a hurry.

32

LUCKNOW,  
April 15, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Agatha seems to be terribly upset over the canard. Please pacify her by asking Parasnathji to send her all the cuttings bearing on the incident and explaining how the thing happened.

Jawaharlalji is in the throes of creating the new W.C. He is faced with an unprecedented situation, and we have had to postpone our stay until tomorrow when we leave by the Lucknow-Bombay mail.

Dinkar Pandya is writing to say that he has had a long conversation with you and that you have asked him to see Bapu. Bapu wants to know exactly what happened between you and him, what is your ultimate opinion of him, and what you want to be done about him or with him.

I wrote a long letter to you from Allahabad. I wonder if you got it.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

33

April 17, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am asking my secretary to send all the cuttings to Agatha. A rumour goes in New Delhi in certain quarters that I was responsible for concoction of the story. My position therefore has been misunderstood and so I am finding it necessary to write to Lord Linlithgow to acquaint him with the situation.

As regards your long letter about *The Hindustan Times* I agree with what you say, but I find that *The Hindustan Times* means Parasnathji and Devdas. I am after all an outsider and I fear they would not like my taking any interest in the matter of administration. I have told Parasnathji my own views and he

has dismissed Salivati. Joseph will go by the end of this month, but Chamanlal still attracts Parasnathji and I cannot persuade him to send the fellow away. I hope some day Parasnathji and Devdas will feel inclined to agree with me. As regards Shri Krishna, the best course would be that you write to Devdas and through him persuade Parasnathji to help.

As regards the young man, you can send him when I return to Delhi. Just now, I am going away to Calcutta and don't hope to return before 2/3 months.

Panditji (Malaviyaji) has not yet made up his mind about Travancore and I don't know whether he will go at all. In any case I have told Ramchandran that I will be at his disposal whenever I am wanted. I hope Bapu knows that I was able to settle up the Jatha and procession problem with the Durbar. Only we should call the Jatha by the name of Pracharak Mandal and procession by the name of Nagar Keertan. They had to stop some Christian processions also and I am told that they could not make any discrimination in the case of caste Hindus. The name by which you call these ceremonies makes a great difference to these rulers and we are after the substance and not after any particular name.

Now as regards Dinkar Pandya certainly I have not asked him to see Bapu. We had a long talk. I pointed out to him that in my opinion, he was failure. The Bajri seeds were wasted, the Karaunda seeds were wasted, the sheep died, the bull did not mate and the Australian sheep and rams were on the verge of death. Immediately I reached Pilani. In spite of the so-called difficulty, within a day of my arrival, I could mate the bull with a cow. All the difficulties that Pandya told were more in imagination. Somehow or other, Dinkar struck me as a man who always makes up his mind that something could not be done as there were difficulties and then he would not move. This is his temperament, otherwise he is a hardworking and conscientious man. He is pennywise and pound-foolish. Many a time he wasted a pound to save a penny. I also told him that I realised that he was a new man and that I could not expect good results from him in the beginning. I therefore said that we could have another trial for at least 6 months. He knew me and my defects and I said I knew his weak points too. I asked him to give me a definite idea of what he could achieve and with what expense?



To this he replied that he felt that my method of work and his were poles apart and that he would find it difficult to work with me. It was all a pleasant talk and frank at the same time. I said that I knew that I was a difficult man and if he thought that he could not work with me, then nothing more could be said. Then he said, "Would it be useful if we both met Bapu at the same time?" I said I do not think it necessary. In the Harijan Sevak Sangh, I was working directly under the instructions of Bapu, but in Pilani I ran things after my own whims. Of course, I consulted Bapu but that was for my own benefit. But I told him that before he decided to leave the place, he may consult Bapu and so he wrote to him. I hope this explains the matter fully. Please acquaint Bapu with the position.

Yours,  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQ.

### 34

April 19, 1936

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I would not have written immediately on your arrival, but there is a matter which owes an explanation from me.

I am the virtual proprietor of *The Hindustan Times* a daily paper printed in Delhi which was responsible for that canard about Lord Halifax arranging an interview between Your Excellency and Mr. Gandhi. The special correspondent of the paper at Bombay having heard from a friend about the rumour prevailing in Delhi that Your Excellency was likely to see Mr. Gandhi, concocted a story and wired it to the paper. It was published during the temporary absence of its Managing Director. Immediately I read the story at Gwalior, where I had gone on a business trip, I phoned to the Managing Director, who himself was shocked at the publication. He was asked to contradict the story which was immediately done, followed by the Government denial. The special correspondent responsible

for the fabrication of the story has been dismissed and we are thinking seriously the question of overhauling of the editorial staff. I write this to express my sincerest regret and to say how unhappy I felt over this episode.

As in many other countries, so in India, there is a notion that journalism can thrive only on sensation. This is not the policy of *The Hindustan Times* and so we are taking steps to overhaul the editorial side of the paper.

It may interest Your Excellency to know that more or less the same story was published in the *Hindu* of Madras, a day earlier, and in the *Patrika* of Calcutta and the *People* of Lahore a day later, as could be seen from the enclosed cuttings. It appears that the news agency correspondents were victims of a common source. I am, however, very unhappy specially that in a paper with which I am personally associated, such a thing should have been published.

With kind regards,

*I beg to remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas Birla*

THE RT. HON'BLE H. E. A. H. HOPE  
THE MARQUESS OF LINLITHGOW,  
KT., P.C., G.C.I.E.  
VICEROY & GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

### 35

WARDHA,  
April 20, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have to thank you for your long letter. I was simply voicing Bapu's sentiments when I wrote about the *H. T.* There has been a fresh blunder. The *H. T.* published the other day a statement (described as authoritative) to the effect that the estimated deficit of Rs. 20,000 of the Congress was due solely to the Exhibition! This simply took Bapu's breath away when he read

it, and he said it was nothing short of a libel. So far as the Exhibition is concerned the Exhibition authorities expect that the expenses will be covered by the receipts which amount to Rs. 25,000. Now no one was responsible for this statement but Chamanlal—but whoever may be responsible it is one which ought not to have appeared in the *H. T.* You may gauge Bapu's feelings in the matter by what he has written to Devdas. I am quoting Bapu's own words in Gujarati.

In my opinion, *The Hindustan Times* has become an altogether useless paper. It does not publish a single correct report, whatever reports are published are harmful. If you are not able to improve its standard, you should wash your hands off it. I do not find a single newspaper which publishes reliable news. I have no desire to cite examples, Mahadev had written to Parasnath about this matter. No improvement has been in evidence. You can hardly do anything. Who can do?

This was written of course before your letter arrived, and I am glad... has been sacked. His blunder was irretrievable and I do not know whether anything that you do will be able to correct the impression. It has blasted for a long time what chances there may have been for a rapprochement. But it has considerably damaged our reputation. I have no doubt the step you contemplate will help to save it.

I see what happened about Dinkar Pandya. Is it not curious that he should not be able to give Bapu an accurate account of what happened between him and you? I have not yet had a talk with Bapu on this matter—today being Monday—but I shall let you know what he has to say in the matter. I think the six months contract is a fair and sporting offer.

I wonder if you have read Jayaprakash Narayan's book—*Why Socialism?* You must read it and let me have your reaction to it. It is a very ably written book.

Bapu has practically decided to go to Segaoon, a village about five miles from here. It is a wretched little village with a population of 600 souls, over one third being Harijans. I have great misgivings about his being able to keep his health during the rains—our villages become hot-beds of malaria in the rainy



season—but once he makes up his mind, he listens to no one. Vallabhbhai's protests have proved in vain and Jamnalalji of course has not put up anything like a fight.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

36

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
April 20, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 18th April. I quite understand the difficulties of the Press and I need not say that it would never have occurred to me that the statement to which you refer had been published with your approval.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your good wishes on the occasion of my Silver Wedding? I am glad that you were able to hear my broadcast. Its recording was, on the whole, extremely successful.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.

37

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
April 23, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

His Excellency has asked me to mention a point in connection with broadcasting to you, if possible before we leave for Dehradun this evening. Is there, despite the very short notice,

any chance of your being able to spare a moment anytime this afternoon? If you would be so kind as to telephone, I will hold myself at your disposal.

*Yours sincerely,*  
J. G. Laithwaite

38

VICEROY'S CAMP,  
INDIA,  
DEHRADUN,  
April 24, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

On His Excellency's instructions, I tried to get in touch with you before we left Delhi yesterday to discuss a question in connection with wireless, and I write now to say how sorry I am to have missed you owing to your absence from Delhi. I hope you will let me know if there is any chance of seeing you in the near future, so that I may have the pleasure of making your personal acquaintance.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.,  
M.L.A.

39

CALCUTTA,  
April 26, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have come to Calcutta and propose to stay here for a month or so. Immediately on the arrival of Lord Linlithgow, I explained to him the position through letter about the blunder of *The Hindustan Times*. He replied that even had I not written

he could not have believed that what appeared in *The Hindustan Times* appeared with my approval. I think so far as he is concerned, he fully trusts and I am no longer worried about it.

But the wider question of improving the policy of *The Hindustan Times* is beyond me. It is entirely Parasnathji first and Devdas next and as Devdas is unwell, Parasnathji alone can correct it. My experience has been that in every walk of our life, we come across certain inefficiency which becomes a problem. Whether it is the rearing of sheep or the running of a mill, the problem is common, and *The Hindustan Times* is no exception. Parasnathji fully realises the difficulties. He agrees with me as regards the goal, but his method of thinking is different from mine. He probably thinks that I do not fully realise the difficulties and so can easily appear in the role of a preacher. But he has to work and so proceed with caution. I, however, do realise his difficulties and yet believe that drastic action alone will solve his own difficulties.

I am sorry that Bapu has taken such a dark view of *The Hindustan Times*. I would not go to that extent. He should have realised that everyone has his own difficulties and being a journalist himself, he should know it more than anyone else. Let us hope, however, that eventually we would be able to come to the standard of Bapu.

Since I wrote to you last, I had further talks with the Maharajah of Travancore and also her Highness. I will tell Bapu some day their own feelings. They have expressed great sympathy with our work, but they are a bit uneasy about our method. They seem to be afraid of everyone. They told me that they have already wired to lift bans against Nagar Keertans and propaganda parties.

I will read Jayaprakash's book and will let you know my views. I note what you say about Bapu's intention to go and settle down in a village. I need not comment. After all, he is not an impractical man and we can trust him for his capacity to look after himself. I am glad, however, that for the time being he is going to Bangalore side.

Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.

WARDHA



40

April 28, 1936

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

I have just received your second letter of the 24th. I myself am sorry that I missed you. But, as I have already written, if there is anything for which I may be wanted, please don't hesitate to ask and I will come.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

J. G. LAITHWAITE, ESQ.  
DEHRADUN

41

88 EATON SQUARE,  
S. W. 1,  
April 29, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letter, and for sending me the copy of what you had written to the Viceroy. I am afraid India is not the only part of the world where some members of the Press are irresponsible, and make mischief.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Halifax

CALCUTTA,  
May 1, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

This time it is the *Tribune* which has put forward the story and I felt rather awkward. I don't know who the correspondent is who saw Lothian's letter to Sapru. The United Press man phoned me and I complained that Indian papers should be so fond of putting baseless stories but I said that in the contradiction he should say nothing more than "It was all nonsense", but he has added "It is baseless" which again is not correct. I have consoled myself by saying that after all what appeared in the *Tribune* most of it is literally untrue.

I am going through Shri Jayaprakash's book. I have not completed the reading as yet. But whatever I have read, has not appealed to me much. It appeared to be an ordinary and artificial treatment to me. The language is pungent and may persuade the vested interests to unite for the fight. This will widen the gap all the more and socialism will remain a far-fetched goal. What I feel is that these people are dragging the real socialism backward which Bapuji is trying to accomplish. I am for the equal distribution of the wealth but do not think it can ever be achieved through ways and means Jayaprakash Narayan has suggested.

There is one more point. Has anyone calculated that if today all the wealth was nationalised and equally distributed, it will increase the income per capita only say very slightly? Socialism will therefore not bring any substantial relief to the present misery. More production is the first necessity. Even distribution can be better assured by less heroic means. Any strong opposition must be avoided.

I find that Jawaharlalji and others swear by Russia. I wonder how they prove their case. If they call the gigantic advancement in Russian production a great achievement of the State, then why should they not compare the production figures of Germany and Italy? I cannot say much about the unemployment problem in Germany and Italy but I understand it compares favourably with many other countries. The success in Russia is partly due to dictatorship and this also applies to

Germany and Italy. The distance between the higher and the lower too has been substantially reduced so far as I understand in both the countries.

It is funny how they swear by Russia and abuse Germany and Italy, I bracket them three together. After all, Hitler has 97% people behind him. This is a fact whether we like Hitler's philosophy or not. If 97% of the population reject Russian theory and have something of their own, who is Jawaharlalji to say this is good and this is bad for the people in Germany? Why should our socialists feel shy of the ballot box with adult franchise? Why should they say that even with adult vote, the man in street cannot look after his interests? If the votes could fight feudalism of medieval age in England, surely they are in a better position today all over the world to fight capitalism if they so desire. The fact, however, is that even the exploitation is not the so-called socialism.

In writing to you about Pandya, I forget to say one thing. I had heard that Pandya felt that he was serving in Pilani on a smaller salary because of his love for service. I told him during my talk with him at Pilani that he should demand his full value from me and that if he wanted pure service and wanted to work on the basis of sacrifice, he should go somewhere else. I said that he should treat this as purely a business proposition and as such, I did not want to be under any obligation. I said the best place for those who want to make sacrifice was Gandhiji's Ashram. As I was not making any sacrifice myself, I could not expect anyone to work in a spirit of sacrifice. I only wanted honesty and efficiency. I thought he agreed.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA



CALCUTTA,  
May 5, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Bapu sent to me Mr. Parnerkar's report on the scheme submitted by Parmeshwari Prasad to Bapu with reference to the Cattle Breeding Farm. I have read the whole thing and I must say that I am very much impressed with this report. He seems to be a capable man although I never met him. Probably this has impressed me more because it tallies with my own views. I have felt all along and still feel very strongly that the Dairy Farm at Delhi should not at all lose money. If it has lost and is likely to lose in future, it is because of the lack of business capacity of Parmeshwari Prasad. After Bapu left Delhi, I had a long talk with him. I told him that although Bapu has got the money for him, he was taking a grave responsibility on himself in continuing the losses which, in my opinion, could be stopped. He faintly realised this and promised that he would discuss the matter with Mahabirprasadji Poddar. I did not want to poke my nose too much in his work and therefore I only give him my advice which I thought set him at thinking.

I hope you have heard from Parasnathji. It appears from what he says that *The Hindustan Times* is not to be blamed for what appeared about the Exhibition. The information was received from a responsible authority and the reporter had no reason to doubt its correctness.

Joseph too has been sent away. Maybe the next turn would be of Chamanlal. I don't think Parasnathji would be able to resist the suggestion for long, but let him make his own experiments. I am rather troublesome when I begin to hammer which I have already started. Like Pandya, Parasnathji has begun to deem that I am interfering too much but I thought it was necessary. Constitutionally I have left everything to Parasnathji and Devdas.

By the way, how is Bapu's health? Is he getting rest? The thought of going to the South is a great temptation to me because Bapu also would be there, but I fear I could not go

just now. Intuition tells me that I may have to go to Simla some time during this month.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

44

May 7, 1936

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Mahadev has gone to Poona. Chandrashekhar is ill. I am leaving for Bangalore tomorrow and shall be staying at Nandi Durg for a fortnight. Thereafter I go to Bangalore for Vallabhbai.

About Parmeshwari, I have already sounded Parnerkar and will do so again. The reason why there is delay in getting Rs. 10,000 for Parmeshwari from Sewa Sangh is that two of the members have voted against, and it has become necessary to call a meeting which can only be held in June. That now Parnerkar has also opposed the idea will only add to the difficulty. It is true that Parnerkar is an experienced worker and he worked for years together in the Sabarmati Ashram. At present he is working at Dhulia on behalf of Cow-Protection League.

Dinkar has seen me. I told him not to get disheartened and to try to give satisfaction. I said his integrity was not in doubt, nor was his perseverance, but you have begun to doubt his capacity. He will see you. Do what you think proper.

I like Segaon.

You can come down to Bangalore whenever necessary. The climate and water there are without doubt excellent.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

45

NANDI HILLS,  
Via BANGALORE,  
May 12, 1936

BHAI GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had to go to Poona for a couple of days and your letter was opened by Bapu in my absence, and I see his remark thereon that he has already replied to it. I suppose in his reply he has fully dealt with the matter about Parmeshwari Prasad. I have an impression that Bapu is in substantial agreement with you.

About that baseless report in the *H.T.* I have had correspondence both with Devdas and Parasnathji. The source was Shri Prakasa I am told, but I am also told that Chamanlal sent the report *after* the first one had been duly contradicted. Of course in this last case Parasnathji or whoever was in charge should not have taken it in. But I have written to Shri Prakasa too, of course, at Bapu's instance.

Bapu is keeping extraordinarily well indeed. Though Sir Mirza and the Medical Officer insisted on his getting up the hill in chair he climbed the whole distance—a matter of about five miles—and none was the worse for it.

There is no place in India to beat this hill in its cleanliness, and its almost divine quiet. We got the telegram about Dr. Ansari rather late yesterday. We were all stunned. Bapu has put in all his sorrow in the brief note he has written for *Harijan*. We are not likely to see the like of Dr. Ansari again. How I wish you had your Executive meeting here, instead of at Calcutta. I suppose now it is not possible to expect you to visit Bapu here. The work in Travancore will not leave you free for a spree of this kind.

Could you tell me the personnel of the trustees of Lalaji Memorial Fund started some years ago? Bapu says you are likely to know.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev



46

CALCUTTA,  
May 20, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am eager to go to South but I cannot say about the dates. Sir Mirza wants me to go before the 30th and participate in the birthday ceremony but I fear it would not be possible. Brajmohan is out of the town and I being alone find a lot to do. In any case, please let me have Bapu's programme. If I cannot be there while Bapu is in the South, then probably I would go after the rains set in. But I should like to go while Bapu is there either before or after the birthday ceremony.

I do not know the names of the Trustees of the Lajpatrai Fund.

I am glad to hear that Bapu is well. Devdas was here and looked much better. He was full of praises for homoeopathy. I call this "pathy" nothing but superstition.

I had a long talk with Devdas about the policy of *The Hindustan Times*. He agreed with my views. Parasnathji and Devdas both are going to work hard to set up a high standard but it will take a long time before they succeed. They have to sweep the dust out of every nook and corner. They are thinking of relieving Chamanlal and also Bharati. Well let us see what they do.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
NANDI HILLS

47

CALCUTTA,  
May 23, 1936

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

I am interested in two dairies, one in Delhi where we also breed cattle for dual purpose and another in Rajputana in my

village which is situated about 100 miles South West of Delhi. The latter was started only a year back and the intention is to concentrate mainly on milk and for the purpose I brought a Holstein bull last year from England. Now in spite of my best efforts, I could not get good cows from Haryana side. This was not the position 10 years back. I remember having purchased at that time good cows from Rohtak side giving as much as from 13 to 15 seers of milk per day. Now to get a cow yielding more than even 8 seers of milk has become a problem. The best cow are exported to big towns never to return home.

While I was in London, I had asked His Excellency whether it was possible to regulate return fare for cattle from big towns in a manner as to make it more attractive to send the good breed back to their original homes rather than allow them to go to the slaughter house. The difficulty in getting good cows from Haryana side for my own dairy makes me think whether it would not be better for me to select good cows in Calcutta and send them back to my village. This would be something like consigning bamboos to Bareilly!

I feel an agony to see that while we should be so anxious to improve breed in India our very object is defeated by the force of circumstances. May I therefore repeat the suggestion that I made to His Excellency in London for his consideration? One would very much like to respond to the appeal that His Excellency made while making presentation of two stud bulls. But the question is how to get good bulls?

I hope His Excellency is quite well.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

J. G. LAITHWAITE, ESQ.

C.I.E.

SIMLA

48

VICEREGAL LODGE,  
SIMLA,  
May 26/27, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Thank you very much for your letter of 23rd May which I have shown to His Excellency. He asks me to say that he had already noted the point which you refer to, the importance of which he fully appreciates, and that he has been making enquiries about it. He hopes to let you know the result in due course.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
J. G. Laithwaite

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

49

VICEREGAL HOUSE,  
SIMLA,  
June 4, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

His Excellency asks me to say that he has now gone very closely into the whole question which you mentioned to him previously and which also arises out of your letter to him of the 23rd May, about cattle breeding.

The question of regulating the return fare for cattle from big towns, so as to make it more attractive to bring good cows back to their original homes, has been discussed at length, notably at a meeting of the Agricultural Committee of the Research Council at which a representative of the Railway Board was present. It appeared that the freight charge on cattle is already at the lowest rate and as a result of the discussion, in which a number of livestock experts, dairymen (including the Imperial



Dairy expert) and private breeders took part, the conclusion was reached that even if such cows were brought back free this concession would have little effect on the trade. A suggestion was indeed made that the cows are maintained, in many cases, under such unsatisfactory conditions in city byres, without suitable exercise and very highly fed on concentrates, that in any case they are difficult to get in calf, and that consequently any cow which has been in a city for any length of time is regarded as likely to be unsatisfactory for breeding, and that the ordinary breeder is not willing to pay any more than, if indeed as much as they would fetch from city butchers. On the other hand His Excellency thinks it only fair to say that he understands that one or two firms, e. g. Keventers, do bring back a certain number of their best cows to breeding areas in North India, and he entirely agrees that anything that could be done to encourage the practice of buying good cows in the city and bringing them back for breeding, or bringing them back as soon as their milk yield has fallen to an unremunerative level, would be of real value. His Excellency is however continuing to take the closest interest in this aspect of the problem which, as he knows you fully appreciate, is by no means free from serious difficulties, and he is arranging for the Animal Husbandry Expert of the Imperial Agricultural Council to visit Bombay and Calcutta as soon as he conveniently can with a view to ascertaining what more can be done.

The enquiries His Excellency has made in connection with your letter undoubtedly go to make it clear that, except in certain government farms where they are produced at considerable expense for the improvement of stock in the Provinces concerned there is some difficulty at present in obtaining high class pedigreed bulls. On the other hand, there are large number of quite good young bulls produced every year in all good breeding tracts which, though there is no recorded pedigree or performance, are quite good for improving ordinary village cattle; and in certain tracts, of which Rohtak is one, organised breeding control which is likely to improve the stock all round is now being undertaken. Finally, if the results which His Excellency hopes can be secured from his present Bull Campaign are satisfactory, it should be possible before very long to start to

build up, in the different provinces, a nucleus of pedigree bulls for stud purposes.

*Yours sincerely,*  
J. G. Laithwaite

*PS.* H. E. asks me to thank you for your letter of 31 May and the cutting enclosed in it.

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

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8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUTTA,  
June 5, 1936

MAHADEVBHAI  
CARE MAHATMA GANDHI  
BANGALORE

LEAVING TOMORROW FOR MADRAS.

GHANSHYAMDAS

51

CALCUTTA,  
June 6, 1936

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

Thanks for your very interesting letter of the 4th June.

The freight charge on cattle may be at the lowest from the point of view of the Railways but it is not so from the point of view of the cattle trade. It costs nearly Rs. 30 per head if one full wagon load is taken of 10 cows back to Haryana. The

freight would be still higher on a smaller number. The price of a dry cow in Calcutta would be about Rs. 30, another Rs. 30 is added to take it back to Rohtak and then another up to Rs. 30 will be required for feeding it until it calves. Thus the cost would be almost prohibitive for undertaking the venture. From the standpoint of the Railways it may be practical to have a higher rate for export to Calcutta and lower for journey back. A certain number of cattle is exported back from Calcutta even now to Chapra side and from all that I have heard, it appears that it is not correct to say that a cow after the city life should be regarded as unsatisfactory for breeding. One of my friends who is keenly interested in breeding has only recently taken back about 20 cows to Gorakhpur and his experience has not been unsatisfactory. Of course, I would not be dogmatic and wait further before pronouncing any definite opinion. All that I wish to say is that we should face the difficulties and find out remedy for them. A cheap return fare, while acting as a healthy check on the slaughter of good breed would not in any way hamper the beef trade because only good breed would be exported. As His Excellency says, "anything that could be done to encourage the practice of buying good cows in the city and bringing them back for breeding would be of real value." I am glad that His Excellency has arranged for the Animal Husbandry an expert to visit Calcutta and Bombay and ascertain what could be done.

As regards bulls, I would write to Mr. N. C. Mehta to find out whether it is possible to obtain good bulls, I did not write to him so far because I found that the Government department had not got sufficient means so far to help the private enthusiasts. For instance, Pusa could not give me any help for securing good cows for me nor could they help me much in apiculture which I am trying to introduce in Delhi, which, if successful, would be introduced in my part of the country.

I read recently in the papers that His Excellency is likely to come to Calcutta. Is it true? I ask this because I wish to see His Excellency. I have not met him since his arrival. Would you kindly let me know whether His Excellency is likely to come to Calcutta and if not, whether it will be convenient for him



to grant me an interview if I go to Simla some time in July.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

J.G. LAITHWAITE, ESQ.  
SIMLA

52

VICEREGAL LODGE,  
SIMLA,  
June 17, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

I have been postponing a reply to your letter about cattle breeding until I had available the further report for which His Excellency has instructed me to ask the experts on the points raised by you, but as it now seems likely that this will take some time to prepare, I send this interim reply at once to let you know that the matter is being gone into.

As regards the point referred to in the last paragraph of your letter, His Excellency's plans are not yet settled, but he does not expect to be in Calcutta in the near future. He asks me to say that he will, of course, be very glad to see you if you happen to be in Simla, but that he would be reluctant to put you to the trouble of coming up specially to see him. If, therefore, later on you happen to be up here and would be so kind as to let me know, I will then try to find a date convenient to you for an interview.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
J. G. Laithwaite

G. D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

53

*Express*

MAHATMA GANDHI  
WARDHA

STATE GUEST HOUSE,  
CAPE COMARIN,  
June 21, 1936

FROM FEET OF MOTHER INDIA SEND MY AFFECTIONATE GREETINGS.  
HAD TWO INTERVIEWS WITH HIS HIGHNESS. PROMISED SATISFAC-  
TORY RESULTS NEXT BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY.

GHANSHYAMDAS

54

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
GUEST HOUSE  
TRIVANDRUM

WARDHAGANJ,  
JUNE 23, 1936

RECEIVED. GOD BLESS YOU.

BAPU

55

June 27, 1936

PUJYA BAPU,

Vallabhbhai will tell you all. There are a lot of things about my tour in the South which could be only related personally and so I have spoken to Vallabhbhai who will tell you everything at length.

I have been definitely promised by the Maharajah and Maharani that they would throw the temples open and make the announcement during the next birthday anniversary of the Maharajah. They were keen that the “gift” should be received in a graceful manner and that it ought not to be demonstrated that we had forced their hands. On the score I gave them full assurance. They are going to utilise the intermediary time in tackling the priests. They have already got three to sign in favour of temple-entry. Jamorin has given his consent. I hope they would be able to take the step as promised at the time of the next Durbar.

I had a talk with Maharajah of Mysore also who said that he was quite ready to admit the Harijans in his Durbar and he would consult his advisers. So, I hope that at Mysore also, we will have Harijans admitted at the next Dussehra Durbar. But the Maharajah of Mysore was not quite prepared just now for temple-entry.

As regards our work that is going on minus your own inspiration and work, I fear I was not very greatly impressed by our own work. There is neither tact nor efficiency and so we have been plodding on. The money is not wasted but I think more useful work could be done with the same amount of money, and a lot of more money could be collected at the spot if we had efficient men. But all these things, I will discuss with you some day when we meet in the Committee. Among our workers Ramchandra of Bangalore tops the list and next come Ramchandran of Trivandrum. Others are either mediocres or inefficient persons. With such a lot of men, I think it is impossible to carry on any well organised work.

With best regards,

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

PUJYA MAHATMA GANDHIJI



June 28, 1936

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

Please pardon me if I said that when you spoke in the House of Lords on the Orders in Council you were not speaking as a realist. When you talk in the most alluring terms of the time that is yet to come, blindly ignoring the present atmosphere, we in India don't feel much impressed. May I again repeat what I said so many times to you and other friends in London that in the present atmosphere there is not even one per cent chance of the Reforms being a success, if by success was meant peace and contentment? When I returned from London, I got Gandhiji to promise that no new commitments would be made until the new Viceroy came. He kept his promise and the Congress officially today stands non-committed as regards the Reforms though Jawaharlal has made up his mind against it. But there is the same lack of personal touch now as it was before. I only hope that Lord Linlithgow would be able to break the ice. If a personal touch and mutual understanding are established, the Congress may accept office and the Reforms, I hope, would be successful. On the other hand, if the present-day atmosphere continued, then the Congress is bound to adopt wrecking tactics. The Secretary of State tells us, he said in his speech, that special powers would then be used. But it is exactly what Jawaharlal wants.

Like yourself, I too don't fear any fight between capitalism and socialism if the fight were to take place in legislature. But this too will depend on the atmosphere. In case the Congress accepts office, the fight would be in legislature. The right wing Congress then will come out openly to fight Jawaharlal. The other side of the picture that I can imagine in my mind is Jawaharlal in jail and youngsters developing from socialism into communism and the Government into fascism. I fear the latter is the more likely possibility. If you would be a realist you would not ignore the possibilities ahead.

I am writing this from Bombay where I stay for a few days and then go to Delhi.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
LONDON

57

VICEROY'S CAMP,  
INDIA,  
July 3, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letters of 28th June, which I have shown to His Excellency. His tour programme is now more definite, and he expects to be in New Delhi for some time on the 4th and 5th August. He is very reluctant to put you to the trouble of making a special journey to Simla if an interview on either of the dates in question would be more convenient for you. Perhaps you would be so kind as to let me know.

2. Thank you very much for the very interesting letter from Gorakhpur which you sent me. We are still pursuing this matter with the I.C.A.R., and Colonel Olver is at this moment in Calcutta where I understand he proposes to make certain enquiries.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

G. D. BIRLA, ESQR.  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

58

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
July 4, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I did not ask Mahadev to write about the museum. In fact, I had asked him to write about the other buildings. You might recall that while enumerating my needs I had said that a sum of Rs. 1,00,000 would be needed for the other buildings. Subsequently the Vidyalaya was included among the other buildings. Though at the time of talking of Rs. 1,00,000 the Vidyalaya was kept separate because I was thinking of erecting other buildings at a cost of Rs. 1,00,000 in addition to the Vidyalaya building. But there is not enough money in the funds or in the reserve to defray the expenses incurred on account of the Vidyalaya. I was under the impression that you have sent a certain portion of the amount of Rs. 1,00,000 to Bachhraj & Co. Now I learn that nothing has been credited under this head. That was why I wrote a letter to you at Trivandrum. Presumably you did not get that letter. If it is possible to take out any amount from that Rs. 1,00,000, this may be done.

I have written a letter to Dr. Moonje. You might have received its copy.

What arrangements have been made with Parnerkar?

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

59

SEYMOUR HOUSE,  
17 WATERLOO PLACE,  
S. W. 1,  
July 9, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letter of the 28th June. I do not think that my remarks in the House of Lords can have been



very fully reported in India because I do not think they bear the construction you put upon them in your letter. I am venturing, therefore, to send you a copy of the Hansard.

I earnestly hope that the personal touch, which you quite rightly desire, will soon be established. My impression is that the Viceroy is determined to break through formality and to establish it.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Lothian

G. D. BIRLA, Esq.  
BIRLA HOUSE  
MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD  
BOMBAY

60

VICEREGAL LODGE,  
SIMLA,  
July 13/14, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Thank you very much for your letter of 9th July, which I have shown to His Excellency. He would be glad to see you on the morning of the 5th August, and suggests that you should call on him at 12.15 p.m. at the Viceroy's House, if that time is convenient to you.

2. You will, I think, be glad to know that His Excellency has been interesting himself closely in the very difficult question about which you and also certain other gentlemen have written to him of the disposal of cattle which are sent to Calcutta and other large towns for milk purposes, and which at present are in many cases slaughtered when they go dry; and that the Railway Board in order to facilitate the return of dry cows, have now agreed to introduce a special return rate of six annas per four wheeled vehicle per mile from any N.W. Railway station to Howrah by goods train. A return ticket will be issued providing for the return journey to be completed within a

period of nine months. Steps are being taken to give publicity to this concession. The Railway Board will of course keep a close watch on the advantage taken of it, and if it proves successful, will be willing to extend it for movements from and to other areas as may be required.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

G. D. BIRLA, Esq.

61

HARDWAR,  
July 16, 1936

DEVR MR. LAITHWAITE,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 14th July. I have come here for a short visit to see my parents and will be going back to Delhi shortly. I hope to present myself at the Viceroy's House at 12.15 on the 5th August.

I am extremely gratified to note the contents of the second paragraph of your letter and I am grateful to His Excellency for the same. I feel sure that this concession must lead to beneficial results; and if does not, then we have to analyse the causes of its failure. But we must from the very beginning take note of the fact that the Gwalas who are interested in this trade are very illiterate people and will be slow in taking full advantage of this concession.

If I have understood your letter rightly, it appears that the Railways will give option to the consignor of cows to purchase either single or return ticket. Is my reading correct? If so then in case one purchases only single ticket, viz., only for journey to Howrah, what will the charge then be? I fear in the beginning, the Gwala may not purchase return tickets. The result in that case would be that once the cow becomes dry, even if someone else wants to send the cow back to Punjab, there would be no alternative for the cow than to be sold to the

slaughter house. Would not His Excellency think it better therefore to have differential rates for journeys to and from Calcutta? Suppose 4 annas per mile for a wagon were charged for journey to Howrah and 2 annas per mile for journey back. I am not sure but probably the present rate is 4 annas per mile for each journey.

For myself, I think the best course would be to have a uniform 6 annas rate for export to Calcutta with free ticket for return journey within nine months. This would leave no option to the consignor except to purchase a return ticket which would be sold by the Gwala along with the cow to one interested in bringing the cow back. I do not think this would put any burden on the beef trade. What is likely to happen is that there will be lower price for those dry cows likely to be sold to slaughter house against a higher price for those intended to return. This, in my opinion, would lead to the greater success. I would be sorry indeed if His Excellency got reasons to feel disappointed at the result and therefore I have written at some length.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

J.G. LAITHWAITE, ESQ.  
SIMILA

## 62

HARDWAR,  
July 16, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The enclosure will interest Bapu.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA



63

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
July 21, 1936

DEAR SETHJI,

I am desired by Bapu to send you a copy of his letter to Dr. Moonje and I am enclosing the same.

I arrived here yesterday and am delighted with the quiet of this place. The weather is quite pleasant and the surrounding country is looking its best—so fresh and green.

Bapu looks well—though to me he seems a little thinner.

With best wishes,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Amrit Kaur

64

VICEREGAL LODGE,  
SIMLA,  
July 23, 1936

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letter. I should be delighted to see you if you would care to come in before you go to see the Viceroy. I shall be in my office all the morning.

2. I mentioned in my letter that H.E. has instructed me to investigate the points raised in your earlier letter. I now write to say that you are quite correct in thinking that under the arrangement which has been introduced, consignors of cattle have the option of booking their cows either at a single or a return journey ticket to Howrah. If a single journey ticket is taken the charge will be as it has been heretofore, i.e., 4 annas per wagon per mile for the movement in each direction.

3. I fear that the acceptance of your suggestion for a 6-anna rate for movements to Calcutta with a free return within nine months with no option to the consignor to obtain single journey ticket at the 4-anna rate would not get over the difficulty you

apparently anticipate, as the consignor would then book their cattle to some other station on the E.I. Railway, say Lucknow or Patna, at the 4-anna rate, and rebook then to Calcutta at the same rate. If you think that a better arrangement than the 6-anna return journey rate would be to have the 4-anna rate for booking to Calcutta and 2-anna rate for booking from Calcutta, His Excellency understands that the Railway Board, as the result of the enquiries he has made of them, would probably be ready to issue instruction for a rate of 2 annas per 4-wheeled wagon per mile to be quoted for cows despatched from Howrah to stations on the N.W. Railway, the arrangement for the issue of return journey tickets at the 6-anna rate to be discontinued with the introduction of this rate. But he is inclined to think that, unless you feel strongly that there would be advantage in such an arrangement, having regard to the publicity which has been given to the return 6-anna rate and to the detailed arrangements already made in connection with it—(Incidentally Pandit Malaviya writes to me to say that he is endeavouring to organise a campaign to take advantage of the 6-anna rate), you will probably feel that it will be better to let matters stand as they are.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.

July 26, 1936

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

Thanks for your letter.

Yes, I will come a little earlier and hope to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance.

As regards the other matters, I personally still think that instead of introducing a return six annas fare, it would be better to have two separate rates, four annas for booking to

Calcutta and two annas for booking back. I feel that the Gwala being always tight of money would not make any investment in tickets. I would not say that he would utterly fail to take advantage of the concession, but the result may not be very encouraging. It would therefore be better to have two separate rates, four annas for bookings to Calcutta and two annas for bookings back. It should not be ignored that there may be independent people like myself who may be interested in sending good cows back from Calcutta, who would do so only if there were separate rates for the two journeys. But it would not be enough if the concession was given only on the N.W.R. In fact, there would be many cases where cows would be exported back not to the Punjab but to some parts of U.P. and Behar, the latter places being nearer to Calcutta. Therefore if the concession is to be made successful, it should be introduced on all the railways, that is all the return fares should be reduced by 50% as has been proposed to be done in the case of the N.W. Railway. If His Excellency thinks that before taking any further step, the things should be watched, I have got nothing to say because no harm would be done by waiting for a few months more. But I have not the least doubt that in order to make the scheme successful, eventual modification would be necessary. It may, therefore, be better if from the very beginning separate rates were introduced.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

J. G. LAITHWAITE, ESQ.  
Simla



66

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
July 26, 1936

DEAR RAO BAHADUR<sup>1</sup>,

I have no difficulty about giving general endorsement to your letter to Dr. Moonje. I do not at all understand Dr. Moonje's or Dr. Ambedkar's position. For me the removal of untouchability stands on a footing all its own. It is to me a deeply religious question. The very existence of our religion depends on its voluntary removal by *sevarna* Hindus in the spirit of repentance. It can never be a question of barter for me. And I am glad you take nearly the same position that I do.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M. K. Gandhi

<sup>1</sup>Noted Harijan Leader, Shri M. C. Rao

67

WARDHA,  
July 26, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I enclose copy of Bapu's reply to R. B. Rajah who had sent us a copy of the famous correspondence before your letter came. This is not the first time we realise that the beef eating Doctor is as great a foe of Hinduism as the fire-eater. Dr. A. came with the same proposal to Bapu some months ago and told him that he had already received Malaviyaji's and Kurtakoti's blessings. Kurtakoti's he had, but I do not think he had Malaviyaji's blessings. However, Bapu made it clear to him that it was repugnant to him to think of an essentially religious question in terms of compromise and barter and he had to go away crestfallen. This stunt of his appears to be a tremendous deal, but penitents ought not to be afraid of these deals. That Jugalkishoreji can be so easily duped we know, but I am afraid

you are too soft with him in these matters. I was told that the very man whom you had to turn out because you were fed up with him is now enjoying a fat sinecure under Jugalkishoreji. Why should he if you made it clear that you could not tolerate his presence in your premises? But here perhaps I am transgressing the limits of liberty that even your kind friendship would allow me. Please pardon me if I have done so.

Bapu is apparently happy in Segaon, but far from peaceful. Even there he has the cares of a tremendously big household which often tries his nerves and robs him of his peace.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

68

NEW DELHI,  
July 28, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I very strongly feel that Bapu should take notice of the correspondence about Moonje's move to Ambedkar in the *Harijan*. I think this is a very serious matter and in my opinion the mischief would be nipped in the bud if the matter was brought to the notice of the public.

As regards Thakkar Bapa's letter of the 27th to Bapu although he did not tell me about the incident himself, I have been hearing off and on about all the incidents that he has related and therefore it could not be said that I have been in the dark about the matter. I had an idea to tell Bapu about it when I come to Wardha but now Thakkar Bapa has already written about it.

Another thing which I had heard about which Thakkar Bapa has said nothing is that the lady who stayed there as the guest has not got very good reputation. I am also told that on her being asked by Thakkar Bapa to remove herself from the colony she got very annoyed and is reported to have talked in a very provocative manner before the inmates. I have no direct

information of all that I have said. I am only writing what comes to my ears from time to time.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

69

WARDHA,  
July 28, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had your telegram a moment back. I am sending it on to Bapu. I entirely agree with you that the fellows should be thoroughly exposed, but I do not know that Bapu will take the same view.

Bapu wanted me to remind you that he wrote to you some time ago (when you were touring the South) to send part of the amount you have promised for the Village Industries Museum. They have already expended some 20,000 rupees on the purchase of material, etc. and have drawn for that amount on other funds. Perhaps you never got that letter. Will you kindly attend to this?

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

70

WARDHA,  
July 29, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I showed your telegram to Bapu. He says it would be proper to rush to the Press over that matter. The document is



marked confidential and unless Rajah himself proceeds in the matter, we could not do so. Indeed Rajah has threatened to publish the correspondence, but he has not yet done so. Bapu is wondering if he should write to Moonje direct and ask for his explanation, but he has not yet made up his mind. I shall let you know the developments as they happen.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

71

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
July 30, 1936

DEAR VENKATRAMAN,<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with Shri Birla's wish, I have drafted the appeal for funds. I enclose also my endorsement. I have not the time to make a fair copy for facsimile reproduction. If Shri Birla's conception is different from mine, the draft should be altered as he wishes. I am of opinion that the appeal should not be issued unless some support is guaranteed and arrangements made for collections throughout India.

*Yours truly,*  
M. K. Gandhi

<sup>1</sup>Assistant in Harijad Sevak Sangh of Thakkar Bapa,

### **Gandhiji's Endorsement of the Appeal**

I heartily endorse this appeal. Removal of untouchability is a matter of change of heart. Hearts are not changed by expenditure of money however wise it may. The change will come when we have enough selfless spiritually minded workers. Monetary contributions will be an effective test of the existence of such persons. For one of the results of the change of heart should be incessant work among Harijans. This cannot be done without plenty of funds. Schools and hostels cannot be opened nor can wells be dug without ample funds. I hope therefore that this appeal will receive liberal support from both the rich and the poor according to their means.

M. K. Gandhi

### **The Appeal**

An appeal is respectfully made for atleast Rs...on behalf of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Gandhiji cannot be expected to tour as he did in 1933-34, for collection and stirring public conscience. There is no cause other than the Harijan cause that can claim greater support from caste Hindus who believe that Untouchability is a blot on Hinduism. The only question therefore for the public to consider is whether the Harijan Sevak Sangh is the organisation that is enough to discharge the trust it has undertaken.

Appendix gives enough details to enable the public to judge this for themselves. And if they are satisfied about the fitness of the institution, we hope that a generous response will be made to this appeal.

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SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
July 31, 1936

DEAR DR. MOONJE,

R. B. Rajah has sent Seth Birla and me copies of your correspondence with him on the Yeravda Pact for such use as we may wish to make. But the correspondence on your side is marked confidential. My own opinion is that the subject-matter admits no confidence. But before I can avail myself of the Rao Bahadur's permission, I would like to have your consent to the publication of the correspondence. Meanwhile you will permit me to say that your proposal is subversive of the spirit of the Yeravda Pact and wholly contrary to the object of the anti-untouchability movement.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi

73

WARDHA,  
July 31, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The enclosed is from Bapu's new Secretary in Segaon. She is however only a temporary Secretary. But I am glad she is there, for she can certainly do a lot of things of this kind.

I think Bapu's letter to Moonje was a just thing. I wonder if you saw my article in the last *Harijan*—"A Sin and a Wrong". If you have not, please do see it, and let me have your reaction to it.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev



74

July 31, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Bapu never wrote to me before about the Village Industries Museum. There were one or two other matters also about which Bapu thought he had written to me whereas he never wrote. I don't remember exactly what they were but due to over-work it appears that Bapu sometimes thinks that he had done something while it was never done. He should not overwork himself, if this little flaw in his memory has anything to do with over-work. However, I am writing to Bombay to do the needful as regards the Village Industries Museum. My Bombay office will put itself in touch with Jamnalalji.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

75

JIYAJEERAO COTTON MILLS LTD.,  
GWALIOR,  
August 1, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am going today to Delhi. When I had asked that Bapu should take up the matter in the *Harijan* I had taken it for granted that before doing so he would ask for an explanation from Dr. Moonje. I even now think that the matter must be put before the public and before it is done, Bapu should ask for an explanation from Dr. Moonje.

I am enclosing herewith a cutting from the *Statesman*. Evidently this represents the official view which in my opinion is quite correct.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

76

NEW DELHI,  
August 4, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I received a copy of Bapu's correspondence with Dr. Moonje from Smt. Amrit Kaur and also your letter. As you say Smt. Amrit Kaur is working only temporarily I am writing this to you and not to her. If she is still there please give her my sincerest pranams and tell her why I have not directly replied to her letter.

I am glad that Bapu has taken up the question with Dr. Moonje. Suppose he does not give his consent to the publication of the correspondence, would it mean that we should keep quiet? The matter is of such a public importance that I cannot conceive of our maintaining silence.

Yes, I read your article "A Sin and a Wrong". I liked it. At least among Christians there are noble souls who can speak out the truth. I wish I could say the same thing about the Mohammedans also. How disgracefully they behaved in respect of Hiralal's conversion.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

77

NEW DELHI,  
August 5, 1936

*Copy*

**Interview with Viceroy**  
(Commenced at 12.15 p.m.; lasted 50 minutes)

I said that number of things had happened since I met him in London and I thought that I should complete the story up to date. And so I told him how after lunching with him in London

when every thing was in a vague and uncertain position, I met Lords Zetland, Halifax and Lothian and learnt from them that after corresponding with India it was decided that so long as the old Viceroy remained no useful step could be taken and that personal touch could only be established after the new Viceroy reached. However, I said that this would be too late as the Congress session would be held in April and if any step was to be taken, it should be before this. Also that how I was told by Zetland Halifax, Lothian and Hoare that Gandhiji should make no new commitments until he met the new Viceroy. How after coming back to India I gave their personal message and also my own impression to Gandhiji. How he found it difficult to accept the cheerful view that I took and how yet he promised to see that at Lucknow no new commitments were made. How I said Lord Willingdon took active part in spreading scare about Linlithgow meeting Gandhiji (The Viceroy said he knew it.). How Lord Lothian wrote to Sir Tej a letter which the latter showed to Press people. How I said at this service and officials got upset. I said that I did not know that they had no information about my mission to London. I took it for granted that the S.O.S. must have written to them. At the conclusion I said, "Gandhiji has kept his promise. I do not know wheather you have changed your views. I had pressed my point strongly in London but I would not do so any more now. After all when I talked in London you had no first hand information whereas I had. Now it could not be said that you had not the same advantage of studying the conditions for yourself as I had. My views are known to you. I stick to them with the same vehemence. If you think that you should break the ice and take some step, then you should guide me. On the other hand, if you have changed your views and decided to continue the same old policy, then all that I want to say is that it will be a great mistake, but I would leave it at that." He thought over for a moment and then asked, "What is the relation between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jawaharlal?" I said, "To understand the position you have to understand the temperaments of the two. There is tremendous difference between the temperaments, outlooks and ideas. But this does not come in the way of mutual attachment which is as good as it ever was. So long as Mr. Gandhi lives, there is no danger, so far as I could see, of



any split in the Congress.” He said, “I agree.” Then he asked, “Is Mr. Gandhi going to finance the elections?” I said, “I don’t think so. It will all be done by the Congress and so far as I could see they would do it all right and probably they returned in a majority in five provinces, but it does not suit Gandhi’s temperament to conduct the electioneering campaign.” Then he said, “I must tell you very frankly, when I came here there was a great panic in official circles. *The Hindustan Times* was a very nasty affair. I had a full talk with Sir Henry Craik. I fear it is not possible for me to take any step just now. I recognise that Congress is a very strong party and it may be returned in a majority in many provinces. I admit that the Congress has created a spirit of self-respect and nationalism among people and is largely responsible for bringing about a constitutional change in India. But there are other important parties too. And if I try to be over-friendly with the Congress, then I would be putting the other parties at a great disadvantage. And this might give undue weight to the Congress in election. And I may be charged with partiality. As representative of the Crown therefore it would not be fair for me to do anything that might savour of partiality. There is besides this another point. What can I talk to Mr. Gandhi today? I do not wish to play with him. I cannot change a comma in the Government of India Act. I cannot release the prisoners in Bengal. Then what am I to talk? Of course, if any distinguished person wants to see me. I am always ready to see. Pandit (Madan Mohan Malaviyaji) saw me, you have seen me. But if I specially invite Mr. Gandhi, I fear there would be no justification in doing so.” I said, “I quite appreciate your point. Gandhiji would not ask for an interview at present. Not that he stands on any ceremony. If you express a desire to meet him, he would at once write for an interview. But left to himself he has nothing to say. It is trying for me to have to defend the Congress. I am not in Congress. When I have to clarify your position to the Congress and the position of the Congress to you, I feel myself at a disadvantage. I wonder why you should not seek the opportunity yourself of seeing a Congressman like Gandhi to discuss Congress politics. Then you can get first hand information about their attitude and vice versa. Of course, I never suggested that it was possible to change the Government of India Act at this stage, but there are

a lot of other things that could be done and should be done. Cannot a common formula be found on terrorism? The release of prisoners thus can come on a common ground. There are so many other things which are possible to be done. I don't think the Government today is impartial. Immediately Khan Saheb is released, a ban against his entering the Frontier and the Punjab is put. Assume that Khan Saheb is going to be one of the ministers. You are simply depriving him from carrying on his electioneering campaign. It is not fair. It is neither fairness nor impartiality. By removing all these unfairness the atmosphere could be improved but as I have already said I would not press the point any further. I have pressed my point enough. Now decide for yourself." But I asked, "Do you think the position would be different from what it is today after the election is over?" He said, "Oh yes, tremendously. After election it would be a different picture altogether. I hope to make a substantial contribution after the election is over but I do not make any promise. We do not know what the position would be after election and what step we might have to take." Then he said his information was that Congressmen were trying to avoid office because if they did some constructive work and had to tax people for education and all other things, they might get unpopular. I said, "Your information is absolutely wrong. I have not the slightest doubt that if there was a proper understanding and a good atmosphere, and if Congress accepted office, they would not hesitate for a moment to put new taxation on those who are capable of paying for the purpose of helping education, sanitation and all that. In fact it would only increase the popularity of the Congress." He accepted my point of view but said that he was told this only by a Congressman. But then he said, "Suppose if I met Mr. Gandhi and said, 'I can do this and I can do that and I would put a most liberal interpretation of the Act and even take risks. Would you accept office?' I have not the slightest doubt that he would say, 'No.' " I said, "Your Excellency, you are assuming too much." He said, "Do you think he will agree to acceptance of office?" I said, "Yes, provided he was convinced that there was an atmosphere for doing constructive work for the good of the masses, Gandhiji has been a constructive worker throughout his life and therefore acceptance of office by the Congressmen would not frighten him in the



least. Of course, these has to be the right atmosphere.” Then I again said, “I know your views now and I will forward them to Gandhiji. I am so glad that you have put the things so clearly and so frankly and I would no longer pester you any more on this point. If at any time you want my help, I am at your disposal but as now you have the advantage of studying the things for yourself, I would say nothing. Of Course, I do not agree with your conclusion but that does not matter.”

Then we talked a little about cattle breeding. He said, “It would satisfy my conscience if I could put something in the pocket of the cultivator. I do not care what people thought of me if I succeeded in doing this.” He again said, “Tell Mr. Gandhi that nationalism is not a crime in my opinion and I am capable of taking honest views.” Then he added, “You don’t know how much panic there was in the official circles when I reached India.” I told him that I knew all about it and had even warned him in my letter to him. He said, “I did not think it is as bad as that.”

I need not add that there was a thorough cordiality throughout the conversation and I still stick to my views that he is a good honest man. He has been entirely forced to abandon his ideas and although he still aspires to take some step after the election, he would not make any promise. When I said I hoped to see him again, he said, “Do not come very often to me or else it might be construed that you were trying to influence me too much. But write whenever you wish even though I may disagree with you.”

## 78

NEW DELHI,  
August 6, 1936

PUJYA BAPU,

Yes, I remember we had a talk about the buildings and also the museum, and when Mahadevbhai wrote to me I understood what was meant. But at any rate I did not receive any letter from you so far. I had instructed to send you the money for



the buildings which I understand has been sent.

Parnerkar visited the Cattle Breeding Farm and also the Pilani Dairy farm. He could not see me again before he returned to Wardha because I was away from Delhi. He told me that he would have a talk with you. The things are not running here very satisfactorily. Parmeshwari Prasadji is tight of money and as he was in great difficulty I decided to purchase two stud bulls from him and one or two cows that he wanted to sell. This will carry him on for some time. But we have to come to some definite conclusion. My own opinion is quite definite that this dairy should not lose at any rate more than 3,000 rupees a year. I don't know what opinion Parnerkar holds but Parmeshwari Prasadji says nothing could be done for less than 10,000 rupees. Gododia does not take any interest and you made me managing director without my having anything to do with either the management or the direction. So this is how the matter stands. I think you have to make your mind as to what is to be done.

Now as regards the appeal which you have sent, I fear Mr. Venkatraman could not explain the matter to you fully. As you know we are issuing a small report which gives at a glance all the information about the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. On the front page of the report, we wish to have something from you which we propose to print in a facsimile. It is not exactly an appeal but you may call it an appeal if you like. If it is to be an appeal, it would be to purse and heart both.

As regards the collection of funds, except that we collected in Calcutta and a little money that I have put at the disposal of the Sangh only very recently, we have miserably failed. I spoke to Sir Purshottamdas and Mathuradas in Bombay. They all listened to me with courtesy but did no more. Will you therefore now send me something, a message or an appeal, which we want for the purpose I have mentioned above?

Please wire to me how you feel about my interview with the Viceroy. You warned me through Vallabhbhai that I might embarrass him. You scented the atmosphere rightly but I am glad that I saw him. I think it was necessary and now you know the position stands.

I have just received a letter from Lord Lothian who says, "I earnestly hope that the personal touch which you quite

rightly desire will soon be established. My impression is that the Viceroy is determined to break through formality and to establish it." I don't know what you think after reading this question with the notes that I am sending. My mind is quite clear. For the time being the idea has been abandoned or rather the Viceroy has been forced to abandon the idea. He may be still aspiring or he is aspiring as he said to me, "I may make some substantial contribution towards the improvement of the atmosphere as you call it after the election is over." But you may read anything between the lines and let me have your reactions. I dare say you would approve of what I said. I hope you will not be quite indifferent towards the election. I have begun to realise its importance more and more.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

PUJYA SHRI MAHATMA GANDHIJI

79

WARDHA,  
August 6, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had your telegram. There is just time to enclose a copy of Dr. Moonje's letter received half an hour ago. It speaks for itself—perhaps Bapu may ask him to come. But if he does, I shall let you know.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

80

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
August 7, 1936

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA

UNLESS TIMELY LEAD GIVEN IN CONNECTION WITH RAJAH MOONJE  
CORRESPONDENCE HINDUSABHA LIKELY TO MAKE NEW COMMIT-  
MENTS WHICH WILL BE EMBARRASSING.

GHANSHYAMDAS

81

SEGAON,  
August 7, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have gone through both the letters. The rest, later. Parnerkar has not yet seen me. The interview was quite in order, though I am not optimistic as to its outcome. He will not be able to do anything. There is a world of difference between his policy and ours. I am convinced that it would be better not to proceed in that way. It is not proper to say that I had made any promise. Whatever has been done was done because that was the only proper thing to do, not because of any promise. It was not in public interest to go any further. This I am writing to serve as a guide for the future. What can I do during the election? The only thing I shall try to do is to prevent dissensions within the Congress, and this I am already doing.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu



82

WARDHA,  
August 7, 1936

DEAR MAHATMAJI,

Many thanks for your letter of 31st ultimo which reached my hands here just now on having been redirected from Nagpur and Poona.

I had sent the letter to R.B. M.C. Rajah intending it to be strictly private and confidential and I would earnestly request you to regard it as such. There is nothing to be alarmed about it and a time will come when either the whole correspondence will be published or the matter will drop down as if nothing had happened.

Should you however feel the need of personal discussion in the matter, I will be glad to come over and meet you.

With best respects.

*Yours sincerely,*  
B.S. Moonje

83

August 7, 1936

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

I am thankful to you for your letter of the 9th July. Yes, I find that your speech was not fully reported in India. I really like it and am sending the same to the local Press for publication.

It was refreshing to hear from you that your impression is that "the Viceroy is determined to break through formality and establish personal touch". As yet,, I have seen no sign of it. I met the Viceroy day-before-yesterday and found there was nothing doing. He looked a bit pale and depressed which was probably due to the heat.

I have been feeling like writing to you and Lord Halifax on the whole question and your letter gives me an opportunity to do so.

When I returned to India, I found Lord Willingdon had already set the ball of scare rolling about what the new Viceroy was going to do. The new Viceroy is going to see Gandhiji and will change the old policy. As if in case Gandhi walked to the Viceroy's House, heavens would fall to pieces! An inspired telegram appeared in the *Morning Post* and on the heel of it Sir Tejbahadur Spru showed your letter to friends and Pressmen in which it appears you said something about my having got a promise from Mr. Gandhi not to make any new commitment until he saw the new Viceroy. I hope you would not misunderstand me as I am not blaming you. But all this was fully utilised by these interested in the failure of the establishment of personal touch. Even my own paper *The Hindustan Times* through its Bombay correspondent was duped into printing a silly story about Lord Halifax corresponding with Gandhiji. The Editor and the correspondent had to lose their jobs for this mistake, but the mischief was done.

The services who I always feared were strongly opposed to any move towards touch between the head of the administration and the opposition nursed the scare with its absurd implications and when Lord Linlithgow arrived, he found the atmosphere full of panic and alarm. I do not know what he did and how he thought but the fact is that he has abandoned the idea of personal touch for the time being. My own feeling is that his hands are forced.

Probably he has been advised that if he did anything before the elections are over, he may thereby help the Congress. I fear he has been grossly ill-advised. The idea of establishing a personal touch is only a means. The whole question is, "Should we make a serious effort to direct the energies of India once for all towards constitutional channels?" This can only be possible by ending the "Police State" you call it and by creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding as which will for a long time to come exclude the idea of any direct action.

It is necessary for the leaders in personal talk to know how far the best of British is ready to help India in her onward march; how the reforms will be worked with the most liberal interpretation even to the extent of taking risks. All this has to be talked personally now and not after the elections. The best time for such a move was a year back. The Bihar earthquake had



given a good opportunity for joint work and mutual touch. Now it is slightly worse but after the elections when the Congress comes in a majority in many provinces, which I think they will, the time will be much worse. If when the Congress comes out with triumph, the Government tried to show friendship it will make little impression. On the other hand I also fear that even during the election days there may be a clash which will ruin the whole atmosphere. All the provincial Governments are not taking impartial attitude towards the elections.

There is another point. Lord Linlithgow has created a very good atmosphere for himself. The scare about his seeing Gandhiji made him a little popular and he has further created a very good impression by his interest in rural matters. The charm may break at the time when the elections are over.

Things are happening for which he is bound to be blamed. Take the case of the Frontier. Abdul Ghaffar Khan has been forbidden to enter the Frontier and the Punjab and yet if anybody has a claim to control the new Government under the new reforms in the Frontier, on account of his hold on the public, it is Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Virtually he is deprived of his right to conduct his electioneering campaign. Why should not we assume that he is going to be the Chief Minister in the Frontier under the new reforms and that the present Government by banning his entry is showing partiality in favour of the present ministers who are rioting against him? So far not a word has been said against the Viceroy. If anything, the Congress Press is either maintaining silence or is saying something good. But I fear that this may not continue. I pray it may. But once the atmosphere gets poisonous both sides will find it difficult to become friendly. The situation in my opinion demands no delay.

It was a great disappointment to me to find that after having gone to England and brought such a good impression and personal messages for Gandhiji from you and other friends and after having got Gandhiji to respond, I should have failed in such a manner. But it appears that God's will was otherwise. I am not writing to Lord Halifax as you may like to show this letter to him. I still pray that the Viceroy will realise the necessity of creating a good atmosphere without delay. To some extent probably he is helpless but whenever he decides to take



a bold action he will have to face the opposition from his men. I dare say Lord Halifax had the same experience when he invited Gandhiji to talk.

This is the tale of our woes.

With the kindest regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
LONDON

84

WARDHA,  
August 8, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am dictating this to save time. Dinkar came here at about half past six and asked me if I was prepared to go to Segaon with him. I was rather surprised that he was in such a hurry and would not wait even until morning. I had already done my regular constitutional of 11 miles in the morning and was loath to undertake another 5 miles, but curiosity often makes us undertake fool-hardy jobs and I girded up my loins and we got there marching in the dead of night at 8.45. "A cowherd turned into an errand boy", exclaimed Bapu as soon as he knew Dinkar's mission. You know the rest.

I showed your telegram to him. He fully agrees with you and is writing to Mr. Moonje to say that it is no use pretending that the correspondence is confidential, it has been seen by scores of eyes by now and that it was his duty to publish it at once. He himself, i.e., Bapu, would certainly treat it as confidential, but no one else would do it. He has also told him that

no earthly purpose would be served by his coming over to Wardha to see him.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SJT. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
NEW DELHI

85

NEW DELHI,  
August 10, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I was really sorry that you had to do another five miles. I was very keen to get Pandya back before I left for Kashmir. Please don't think that I am going for a change. I am accompanying who is curious to visit the place which none of us has seen before.

I hope Bapu is going to write about this Moonje correspondence.

I wonder what you thought of the meeting. So far as I am concerned, I have told him that I no longer would come for this particular thing and there the matter ends.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA,  
August 20, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am sending you under separate post a copy of the proceeding of the Visva-Bharati Samsad. You will be glad to hear the 'anonymous' donation of Rs. 60,000 has helped them to pay off the old debts and for once their budget seems to be balanced. How long it will continue to be so, we do not know! Did you have nice time in Kashmir?

I deliberately refrained from writing to you on the subject of that historic interview. These things do not bear to be discussed through correspondence.

I am looking forward to your arrival here some time next month. Perhaps the weather will be more propitious to you than it was to Pandit Jawaharlal who was here last week. He had to walk part of the way in rain and mud. Bapu is getting more and more absorbed in his village work and feels no inclination to give any time to correspondence or to writing. Three or four weeks ago he finished writing his statement on socialism but he has not yet found a moment to revise it. Of course, he had collected a number of friends in that little one-room-tenement of his, and problems arising out of their illness naturally occupies the bulk of his time. That however, is not the whole fact of the situation. The fact is that he is turning his mind off from the Congress and all other outside activities and rivetting it entirely on the village and its problems. That he says is his *sadhana*, and he is loath to having it interrupted by any other programme. He received pressing letters from Sir P. T. asking him to go to Bombay to receive the South African deputation, but he resolutely said "No". He is booked to preside over the Gujarat Library Conference in early November in accordance with a promise he gave about a year ago, but he is thoroughly disinclined even to keep that promise and wishes that something or other may turn up to prevent him from going! Perhaps when you are here you will be able to have a correct insight into his present mood.



I hope you are well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SJT. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

87

NEW DELHI,  
August 23, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

We came earlier from Kashmir than originally planned. You are a bit poetical and therefore you may protest if I remarked how I hated the place. It is neither healthy nor extraordinarily beautiful. To compare it with Switzerland is sheer mockery. There are more beautiful places than Kashmir in India itself. For instance Darjeeling and its surrounding area is far more beautiful. There are also much more healthier places than Kashmir in India. Of course I have not yet found a place in India where health and beauty were combined. In Switzerland you find both the virtues. In Kashmir most of our servants were unwell and most of us were living on fifty per cent ration.

I went there half heartedly but my brother Rameshwarji was very keen and so I accompanied him. But in the end we all got disappointed and after changing the sites for a week we left the places.

I am going to Calcutta the day after tomorrow. I will fix up a date for the meeting of the Executive Committee. I am not sure where we are going to hold the meeting. Maybe that we hold it in Wardha. But it appears that this meeting is going to be a lengthy one—it may continue for a week—and in that case I may have the meeting in Calcutta. And then myself and Thakkar Bapa may go to Wardha.

When I go to Wardha, I want to have some quiet time with Bapu. If I go at the time of the meeting, then most of my time will be taken by it and thus I will have little time left. Besides now that Bapu is living at Segaon, probably Calcutta would be very nearly as good as Wardha. There will also be difficulty in Wardha about accommodation. So taking all these things into consideration, I am at present feeling inclined in favour of Calcutta.

Now when I come to Segaon—and I want to come to only to Segaon and not to Wardha—shall I be able to stay there or shall I have to undertake daily journey like you from and to Wardha? I wish to stay with Bapu for four or five days or even more. I hope this will not cause any inconvenience to him. Please therefore advice me what I should do. If I am likely to cause any disturbance, then I may not come at all. I personally feel that I should have four or five days every quarter with Bapu.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

WARDHA,  
August 25, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Mr. Kher who was asked by Bapu to look after the building of the Buddhist Vihar for which you have given the money asked an important question with regard to the Vihar. I enclose his letter with Bapu's reply for your information.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

**True Copy of the Letter Received from Mr. B.G. Kher**

August 11, 1936

DEAR MAHATMAJI,

Shri Dharmanand Kosambi told me that you would like to look into the way the amount given by Birlaji for the Naigaum Vihar is spent. I will do so until the building is ready. I shall see to the application of this amount. Thereafter I do not know what I could do, being today identified with the Harijan Sevak Sangh. How am I to work on a Buddhist Vihar Committee? Are they all going to become Buddhists? Where is the need? However I shall return to this question after the building is ready. In the mean time, I will look into the accounts up to that period. I have told both Shri Kosambi and Mr. Natarajan accordingly. I am sure you will not mind this.

With great respect,

*Yours obediently,*  
B.G. Kher

Copy to :

SHRI GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA

**True Copy of the Letter Addressed to Mr. B.G. Kher**

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
August 24, 1936

MY DEAR KHER,

Having little time, I have delayed acknowledging your important letter. This is no question of anybody becoming a Buddhist. The temple is meant to be one dedicated to Buddha as temples are dedicated to Ram, Krishna and the like. There is no proselytising taint about this movement. As most it is to be a Hindu temple of an advanced type of which a very learned man will be the keeper or *pujari*. That is how I have understood the whole scheme of Prof. Kosambi. You may share this with the professor, and if he endorses my position, with Shri



Natarajan, so that there may be a common understanding about the temple.

Yours sincerely,  
M.K. Gandhi

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MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA,  
August 27, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of the 23rd. I am sorry that the Kashmir trip should have come to such an abrupt end. Fortunately I have never been to Kashmir myself and so nothing that you would say about it, could hurt my sense of poetry; in fact, I am quite prepared to believe with you that there is nothing there which could be described as exceptionally healthy or extraordinarily beautiful. I do not see however, why *all* the servants should have been unwell there and why *every one* should have returned all the worse from Kashmir.

If the Executive Committee is going to have a lengthy sitting and many members are likely to attend, perhaps it may be best to have it in Calcutta.

There should be no difficulty about your being accommodated in Segaoon. You have read all that I have said in *Harijan* about Bapu's one room tenement there, but it is certainly less crowded than it was a week ago and much less crowded than it was a fortnight ago. I hope you will have someone with you to look after your washing and other physical comforts. The monsoon season is practically over and there need not be any crowding in the room or even in the varandah. Almost all of them nowadays sleep under the sky and there are practically no mosquitoes outside. But Bapu wants you to come, if possible *before* the Calcutta meeting and not after.

Sardar Vallabhbhai who is here also wants you to come whilst he is yet here. I do not know if you could manage to be

here during the first week of September. Please let me know as soon as possible.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SJT. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

*PS.* I have your letter of the 24th just now. I shall let you have Bapu's reply tomorrow.

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WARDHA,  
August 28, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I showed your letter of the 24th to Bapu. He appreciates all that you say and he agrees that you should take the earliest opportunity of resigning the managing directorship, but he would ask you to wait yet a while. The thing had been in Bapu's mind all these days, but we do not want to decide anything until after consultation with Jamnalalji and Parmeshwariprasad. Perhaps it will be best if you could postpone your decision until after you have seen Bapu some time next month. I enclose herewith copy of my letter to Parmeshwariprasad.

Love.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SJT. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

BENARES,  
August 29, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have seen Thakkar Bapa's letter to Bapu which he wrote on the 26th inst. regarding loan to the Wardha tannery. We may be short of funds, but I would not wish Bapu to worry about money for his little experiments that he is doing. Therefore although we may formally put the matter before the Executive Committee, eventually whatever Bapu desires will be done.

I am going to look into the affairs of Satis Babu's tannery when I go to Calcutta, but I have not a good impression about it. But I dare say what is being done at Wardha is being done with full knowledge of what has happened at Calcutta. Of course in Calcutta there has been a mistake in putting up something like a miniature factory. In Wardha it is different and therefore there is no likelihood of any big loss.

Dr. Rajan has sent me his resignation. I have not yet accepted it. I have sent him a non-committal reply. But would it be desirable to involve the Sangh in Congress politics? On the other hand, it may be said that on account of his reduced influence his working capacity may be limited. But weighing both sides I feel that if we accepted his resignation we would be criticised for associating ourselves with Congress politics. After all ours is not a political body. Please let me have Bapu's opinion about it.

I am leaving this place shortly and so you should write to me to Calcutta.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas



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August 30, 1936

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
MAGANWADI  
WARDHA

YOUR TELEGRAM. IF BAPU WANTS ME FIRST WEEK SEPTEMBER THEN CAN COME AND WILL POSTPONE COMMITTEE MEETING BY TWO WEEKS. PLEASE WIRE CARE 'LUCKY'.

GHANSHYAMDAS

93

BIRLA HOUSE,  
LALGHAT,  
BENARES,  
August 31, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have wired you yesterday saying that if Bapu wanted me earlier than the Committee meeting then I could reach there between the 8th and the 10th September, otherwise I would be there about the 20th.

I am not resigning until Parmeshwariprasad had replied. I agree with Bapu's letter.

More when we meet.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA

94

WARDHA,  
August 31, 1936

GHANSHYAMDAS  
CARE LUCKY  
CALCUTTA

COME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. VALLABHBHAI WAITING FOR YOU.  
WIRE REPLY.

BAPU

95

WARDHA,  
September 1, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Things have happened with such exasperating rapidity that I have not been able to keep you informed from moment to moment. Bapu was here for the A.I.S.A. meeting on the 27th and 28th. On the 29th evening he walked back to Segaon and had a slight temperature which he completely disregarded. The next day he went through his work as usual. On the 31st morning I got your telegram. I sent it on to him for his reply and as soon as I got the reply I despatched it to you. In the afternoon I went to Segaon as usually only to find that Bapu was in bed with 150° temperature. I had a fear on Saturday that this was malaria and that he would again have it on Monday, but he simply laughed at the suggestion. Jamnalalji was evidently alarmed and sent you a telegram asking you not to come. It is only this morning that I learnt from him that he had sent the telegram to you. Today Bapu has no fever, but it is very likely that he may get it tomorrow. Perhaps it is just as well that you are not coming, because you would not be in a mood to discuss things with him in his present state of health. I am going there just now with the civil surgeon who is going to persuade him to

come to Wardha atleast so long as he has fever, but I do not think that he will listen to any such suggestion.

I shall keep you regularly informed. Please don't be anxious.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

PS. Dictated in the morning.

96

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA,  
September 1, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The enclosed which was dictated this morning was by mistake sent to Delhi. I am therefore sending you a copy along with this. This I am dictating on my return from Segaon this evening.

I am happy to tell you that Bapu had no fever today. The Civil Surgeon has taken his blood for examination and hopes to be able to tell us tomorrow whether it is ordinary malaria or malignant. If it is the latter, and he has fever again, he has consented to come to Maganwadi day after tomorrow so that he may be within easy reach of medical aid.

You are right about the Wardha tannery. Thakkar Bapa ought not to have sent that letter to Bapu. The loan to the tannery was to be found from Bapu's earmarked fund. You are equally right about Satis Babu's tannery.

I ascertained Bapu's opinion regarding Dr. Rajan's resignation. He says that the resignation should not be accepted before Dr. Rajan can satisfy us as to the reasons which have led him to send in his resignation. You will have to write to him to say that his selection as president of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was made not because of his politics, but because of his deep and genuine interest in the Harijan's welfare; that you have no reason to doubt that he continues, to have the same interest in their welfare, no matter how this situation has changed so far



as his political position is concerned; that perhaps, his retirement from the Congress politics should be all the better reason why he should retain his presidentship of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, in as much as his energies could now be exclusively used for Harijan work. If, however, he has any reasons to show which are more substantial than those arising out of his retirement from the Congress, the Committee should be prepared to consider them.

It is quite likely that if you write to him, somewhat to this effect, he may not press his resignation.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SJT. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

*PS.* This was dictated at 9 p.m. It will go tomorrow with late fee. Please do not worry about Bapu. I will keep you informed daily. Please read the enclosure. It contains news about his health.

WARDHA,  
September 2, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I saw Bapu this morning and though he was very weak, he had no fever during the day but he is taking every precaution and also taking quinine. If he gets fever today, he has promised to shift tomorrow to Wardha and it is likely he may stay here until he is declared completely free from malaria by the doctors.

I have a letter today from Parmeshwariprasad. I gather from it that he would like to be here whilst you are here and he also wants Pandya and Parnerkar to be here in order to help in the discussion. If you are now in a position to fix the exact

date of your arrival here as also to tell me when I should call these friends here, please let me know. I am not writing to them until I hear from you.

Vallabhbhai who was to have waited here for you is leaving today for Bombay. He has promised, though, to come when you are here.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

The enclosure is for Brajmohanji.

98

CALCUTTA,  
September 3, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Your two letters reached me just now. While the anxiety was already caused by Jamnalal's telegram which in my opinion should have been a little more clear, I am very much relieved to have the full report. If it is malaria, then he must take quinine and put himself entirely in the hands of the doctors. I hope he is free from fever now.

You might have noticed that I have been appointed a non-official adviser for the Indo-British trade negotiations to represent trade and commerce. These negotiations arise out of the cancellation of the Ottawa Pact and the Government have this time been wise enough to take the Indian commercial community into their confidence. Myself, Kasturbhai and Sir Pursottamdas are to be representatives of the Indian trade and commerce. I don't know anything about the programme but I may have to go to Simla in the near future. I have also to come to Wardha when Bapu is better.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

*PS.* Since writing the above, I have just received Jamnalalji's telegram informing me that the temperature is 105. While it is rather alarming, for malaria fever this is not unusual. I am glad that Bapu has now come to Wardha and I hope to receive more cheerful news tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

99

WARDHAGANJ,  
September 4, 1936

LUCKY  
CALCUTTA

FAIRLY GOOD SLEEP. NO FEVER TODAY.

JAMNALAL

100

CALCUTTA,  
September 4, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

We have now been getting Press telegrams which give up to date reports about Bapu's health. I hope he will be all right in a day or two.

Now about my coming to Wardha. It is funny how things are shaped without your having any hand in them. The day I was to leave Benares for Calcutta, I got Bapu's telegram that I should go to Wardha as soon as possible. And I had packed up my things to go straight to Wardha, when I get another telegram asking me not to come. And on coming to Calcutta, I find that to represent the Indian trade and commerce I have been appointed an official adviser for the Indo-British trade negotia-



tions. This last of course was not unexpected. All the same, I was surprised that of all men they should have asked me to take up this work. As Sir Purshottamdas and Kasturbhai were also invited, I agreed to represent the trade and commerce. And now I hear that I must reach Simla on the 13th for a meeting which would last for about a fortnight. So, I have wired Thakkar Bapa to have the Executive Committee meeting by the end of September in Delhi and then I propose to go to Wardha. Probably it would be about the first week of October but I would not like to say anything with certainty because it is not in my own hands. I hope to fix up my programme with greater certainty at Simla and then I will write to you.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

101

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA,  
September 5, 1936

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of the 3rd. Did I not tell you that Bapu started taking quinine from the very day on which he had the first attack? He is still taking it, perhaps in larger doses, now that he is in the hospital and in charge of doctors! He has had no fever for something like 60 hours now. I think he has seen the last of it. Of course high temperature in malaria is not unusual and so I was not at all alarmed. I should not even have sent a Press telegram, but for an urgent telegram from the Associated Press. I am by nature not panicky and this time I had decided not to inform anyone, but as you know it has become a physical impossibility to keep the fact of even an ordinary fever in case of Bapu, a secret.

I think that you are being entrusted with work of a very great magnitude and responsibility. I wish increasing strength to your elbow. I have already requested you to let me know

the exact date of your arrival here in order that I may be able to give the dairy people sufficient notice.

I suppose Bapu will stay in the hospital for two or three more days. How I wish he could be prevailed upon to stay on here for a fortnight or more! For if he goes back immediately to Segaon he will go back to the same crowded one-room-tene-ment and the same place infested with mosquitoes and sur-ounded all round with plenty of vegetable.

Let us however hope for the best.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

SJT. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

*PS.* Got your second letter. It means you will not be here before October.

102

CALCUTTA,  
September 8, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Malaria generally relapses and so mere eating of quinine would not be sufficient. Perhaps the doctors have already said that his blood should be examined for some time after the effect of quinine is over. Unless he is watched carefully, he may get another relapse. And Segaon is the last place where he should live until he is free from the disease. Why should not he decide to stay at Wardha until the end of November? Please make this request on my behalf. The very fact that he could not avoid malaria in Segaon should enable us to press this request.

I had heard from eminent doctors that quinine injection

Pandya from this place. I have not got anyone to replace him but such work as is being carried on just now can be supervised by an ordinary man. Next time when I select a man, I will try to get someone from the agriculturist class. It is not easy to get a good man, but Pandya is not the ideal selection.

Please write to me your impressions from Travancore. Why not arrange to send a special letter to *The Hindustan Times*?

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M.D. DESAI, ESQR.

125

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
December 31, 1936

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I read in one of your articles in the *Harijan* that some lady has sent you seeds of Canadian Globe thistles which, it is said, are good for providing honey to bees. Could you share with me a part of it? You know how deeply I am interested in honey producing and honey eating, but so far as honey producing is concerned, I have been a failure.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M.D. DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA



Letter without Date

126

UTTARAYAN,  
SANTI NIKETAN  
BENGAL,

MAHATMAJI,

I was going against my *svadharma*; you have saved me from that calamity. No more of this life for me, I assure you. My blessings.

With best love,

Rabindranath Tagore

1937





# 1

NEW DELHI,  
January 1, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The article in the *Harijanbandhu* under the caption "Hindu Achar" is a very good guide to the Harijan workers, but I don't appreciate Clause 14. One who acts according to it would only breed cowardice. What should one do in self-defence? Besides, if anybody misbehaves with one's womenfolk, should he keep quiet? This is the interpretation that is likely to be put to Clause 14. Please draw the attention of Bapu.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M.D. DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

# 2

QUILON,  
January 17, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

This I am writing in Hindi with a purpose. It is becoming increasingly evident every moment of our stay here that this area had badly needed a visit from Bapu. This has been made strikingly obvious by their Highness. Both the Maharajah and his consort received him with gushing affection and Her Highness seems to have adopted him as her father. There is not the shadow of a doubt that behind this outstanding reform there is the Maharani's hidden hand.

However, we should now carry this work to the other states as well in order to lend strength to their Highness' efforts in this direction. Her Highness personally inquired about how it

was in Bhavnagar and in the other Kathiawar states. Bapu wants to know if this work could be set on foot in the Gwalior state. If the reform initiated in this state fails to attract attention in the other princely states, it might prove so much wasted effort. Even some sort of a reaction might set in. Just now the caste Hindus are rather indifferent, though still engaged in clandestine effort to negate the reform. This mental attitude could only be fought against successfully, if the temples in other states as well are thrown open.

Pujya Malaviyaji could not spare a single word in appreciation of this reform; nor has he thought fit to thank Their Highness for this noble gesture. Could you please impress upon him the necessity of doing this much? I am also writing to him.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

Bapu is quite well, though he has contracted a slight cold.

### 3

NEW DELHI,  
January 17, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I did not write to you about the last meeting of the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Probably Thakkar Bapa may have written to you. I did not do so because Bapu was travelling, but I may tell you that the last meeting was a very tame affair. I have used the word 'economic interpretation' jocularly so many times in respect of many things but the last meeting of the Board could be interpreted in no other expression. The members ask, "Where is the necessity of our affiliation when you are not in a position to pay us?" I told them that it was up to them to decide whether they were to continue to be affiliated or not. I think after we stop paying, we shall know more clearly who is who. In a way it is very good because so far our work apart from Bapu's has been built up very much on the foundation of money.

There is another point which some day I would discuss with Bapu personally. The budget of the Industrial Home amounts to 9,000 rupees per year and we are educating only about 35 boys. The education itself is of very ordinary character. The expense therefore in my opinion is too high. On the other hand, the budget of the Central Board, office expenses, etc. itself comes to about 10,000 rupees of which about 6,000 rupees is spent on salary. It is possible to make it economic in both the places. I will have a talk with Thakkar Bapa tactfully and I don't think there will be any difficulty. Just now we have got Thakkar Bapa, Venkataraman, Shyamlal and Karansingh and in the Industrial Home we have got Malkani, Hariji, Tyagi and one clerk. I am sure we don't want so many men for this small work. But economy could be effected only if the Industrial Home as well as the Central Office were put under the charge of one man. In my opinion it should be possible to do all this work with Thakkar Bapa, Shyamlal and Hariji, but just now I am thinking of 12 months ahead. I will some day discuss this point with Bapu.

I hope Bapu's tour was quite successful. Somehow or other I have a feeling that he was not quite happy in Travancore.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.

#### 4

BIRLA HOUSE,  
LALGHAT,  
BENARES,  
January 20, 1937

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
MAGANWADI  
WARDHA

REFERENCE BARODA ENQUIRY. ANANDAPRIYA PARTY OBJECTS ENQUIRY BEING HELD OUTSIDE BARODA. SARDAR NATURALLY CANT



PLACE EVIDENCE IN BARODA. BESIDES BHAIJI FEELING GREAT EMBARRASSMENT. NOT PREPARED GO BARODA AS JUDGE AND MERE VISITING WILL HELP NONE. BESIDES HAVE STRONG APPREHENSION HIS BEING EXPLOITED FINANCIALLY BY INTERESTED PERSONS. HE RELUCTANT GETTING INVOLVED BUT FEELS AS BAPU ASKED HE MUST GO BARODA BUT NOT FEELING SELF-CONFIDENT USEFUL RESULT AS FIRSTLY CONFESSES HAS PARTIALITY TOWARDS ANAND-PRIYA. SECONDLY HAS NO HEART. I THEREFORE REQUEST HIS EXEMPTION. HAVE WRITTEN FULLY TODAY.

GHANSHYAMDAS

5

BIRLA HOUSE,  
LALGHAT,  
BENARES,  
January 20, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have come from Delhi and am going to Calcutta shortly. Bhaiji is in Delhi and is still undecided whether he should go to Baroda or not. He had almost decided to go to Baroda when Sardar wired that he would neither come to Baroda nor would he be able to produce evidence there. Sardar says that given one week's notice, he could produce available evidence in Bombay. And Bhaiji is now feeling nervous about the whole thing. Between his reverence towards Bapu and his partiality towards Anandapriya he is struggling. He says that he does not go to Baroda in the capacity of a judge. He will just listen to what both sides have to say and will report the whole thing to Bapu without any comment. He does not understand even the elementary principles of judicial enquiry nor has he the desire to go deep into the things. He confesses, and I understand he has already written to Bapu, that he is partial towards Anandapriya.

But this is not the only difficulty. In sending him to Baroda, he is being exposed to risk of exploitation. At Baroda he will be made to part with donations to Anandapriya amounting to

fifteen to twenty thousand rupees. Thus while the case would be sub-judice Bhaiji would be showering his gifts on the institution! This would not be a desirable thing.

Bhaiji has told me all these things and he says that he would not like to go unless Mahatmaji desires that he should go. I understand his difficulty and in my opinion to insist that he should go would be exposing him to the risk of exploitation by undesirable persons. In my judgment, he must not go firstly because he would not be going there in the capacity of a judge to make impartial enquiries and secondly he will be exploited. If Anandapriya does not accept an impartial enquiry, then either the whole thing has to be dropped or Sardar has to take a strong attitude. Probably dropping the matter would be the better course. However, that is a thing upon which probably Sardar will have to say more, but so far as Bhaiji is concerned, I am definitely of the opinion that neither in his own interest nor in the interest of the institution should he be sent to Baroda.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M.D. DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

6

KOTTAYAM,  
TRAVANCORE,  
January 20, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

We have witnessed during the week scenes of unforgettable beauty and solemnity and Bapu said at one meeting that it would have been stupidly foolish of him if he had cheerlessly refused to accept the invitation to go to Travancore. It is a great land no doubt and will go down in history for having purged itself of untouchability within the twinkling of an eye.

You asked me to send telegram to *H.T.* Our journey has

been strenuous and through places beyond the reach of telegraph offices, and I thought it was no use sending anything by post. And besides whilst I am in such scenes I forget my position as a correspondent or a chronicler and become part of the crowd.

Well this was not to write a line about Travancore, but just a business letter to inform you that Parnerkar is ready to go to Calcutta whenever you might wish him to do so. Will you please let me have a line or rather a wire at Wardha where we arrive on the 24th—to say when he should report himself at Calcutta.

Yours,  
Mahadev

## 7

BIRLA HOUSE,  
BENARES,  
January 23, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your letter of the 17th written from Quilon. I had written to you a number of letters recently but evidently you have been keeping so busy that none of them has been replied so far. The last letter was about Bhaiji's visit to Baroda and in this connection I had also sent you a telegram. I am expecting a reply to my telegram at any moment.

I was pleased to hear from you that you were all pleased with your visit to Travancore. I had some apprehension in my mind, based not on reason, that perhaps Bapu was not quite happy with his visit to Travancore but now your letter has removed any such fear from my mind.

With reference to our taking action in other States, I personally think that a lot could be done and still much more could be done in British India. After the elections are over in my opinion we should take up the question in right earnest in those provinces where the Congress is in majority. We would not require any all-India legislation under the new Reforms Act. The question of religion and all that, I understand, is purely a provincial matter and therefore we ought to introduce Bills



immediately in the various provinces. And if by chance the Congress accepts ministry, then in my opinion all the obstacles would be surmounted.

With reference to Gwalior, I will look into the matter when I go there. This is not a thing which could be done through correspondence. I entirely agree with you that unless something is done outside Travancore, the reform may not be a complete success.

About Malaviyaji, less said the better, I am pained to write to you that he is not straightforward in his answers. I got the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha, which is a very important association, to send a congratulatory telegram to His Highness but Malaviyaji does not say 'No'. He simply says that now it is too late. And when we sent frantic telegrams and letters to him immediately after the proclamation, he kept mum. The way in which he acted in the Punjab in respect of elections also was most disappointing. But in spite of all this, he is a great man and there is something in him that makes him great. But he is hopeless in any practical work so far as I could see.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M. D. DESAI. ESQR.

8

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
January 25, 1937

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I had been hesitating to go to Travancore, but the visit has proved to be worth the trouble. I do not know what the others gained from this visit, but my own gain was quite substantial in terms of the money that was collected. You will find a short description of this visit in *Harijan*. But my description will not suffice, unless it is doubled.

I met both the Maharajah and the Maharani. Everything

was discussed in detail without any reservation. It would not have been possible to bring about such deep awakening among the Harijans by any other means.

I am feeling increasingly confirmed in my view that the centre can be helpful to the branches not by doling out money but by extending moral support and lending them its prestige. If the branches feel dissatisfied the work might as well be suspended or, as an alternative, they could function independently. In that case we could do whatever is possible to do through agencies. Branches not capable of raising funds adequate to meet their own expenses should be treated as worse than useless. I do not think it is at all necessary to wait for a few years before bringing that about. If it is deemed necessary to effect changes in the conduct of the Harijan Home, why postpone it for a year? Why not start doing it right away? Thakkar Bapa must, of course, be sounded about the proposal. It is also worth while consulting Malkani as well.

I have been trying to entice Dinkar. I have already written to him. And also in correspondence with Parmeshwari. From the latter I awaited one more letter after which I shall write to you. I have consented to permit him to set up a new institution, and so long as it is managed well, he may be left in charge of it, the only condition being that he would make do with the existing assets without raising fresh loans.

If you have time to spare you might as well come down here for a while.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

## 9

8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUTTA,  
January 27, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

With reference to Parnerkar I will send a telegram tomorrow or day-after-tomorrow when Sir Badridas, President of the

Pinjrapole, returns from Bombay.

I came here only this morning and Pandya who is here on business tells me that he had received a letter from Bapu. He showed it to me also. To tell you frankly, I find it so difficult to make up my mind about Pandya. When he is not before me, I decide to dispense with his services as he is not likely to give us successful results, but when he comes before me, I begin to think of Pandya himself. He is really an honest man but lacks in brilliance and to some extent in commonsense. I have told him that I will make up my mind after some time.

I fear it would be a hardship on him but purely from the point of view of the work, I don't think he can be of great help. The sheep are dying and Jersey cow also died all of a sudden. Probably it could not have been avoided but I feel that had there been a better man, he could have at least told me why were a failure.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M. D. DESAI, ESQR.

10

BIRLA BROS,  
CALCUTTA,  
February 1, 1937

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
MAGANWADI  
WARDHA

JUST NOW PANDYA WORKING FOR PINJRAPOLE. IF WANT FURTHER  
EXPERT OPINION WILL ASK YOU FOR PARNERKAR.

GHANSHYAMDAS



11

CALCUTTA,  
February 3, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

It appears as if you are on tour because all my letters to you are being replied by Bapu himself. I hope you have returned by this time. In order to save Bapu's time, I am still writing to you.

I have just now received a letter from Bapu. It does not require any reply except that please tell him that in the ordinary course, I would be coming to Wardha about the end of this month. But in case he wants me earlier, he has simply to write and I will come immediately. Please let me know about possible dates on which he is likely to be free. The Working Committee, I understand, will also meet in Wardha some time about the end of this month. Have the dates been fixed? Probably I may like to come a little earlier. However, I will abide by Bapu's convenience.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M. D. DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

12

WARDHA,  
February 5, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

How could I have gone on tour, leaving Bapu behind? I have all the time been here with Bapu ever since we returned from Travancore. The fact is that when your letters contain matters on which you seek Bapu's advice, I forward these to Bapu instead of going to Segaon myself. Then these letters are attended to by Bapu himself.

You want to know on what dates Bapu is likely to be free.

Bapu and freedom are the antipoles. This position remains unaltered. You are at complete liberty to come any time that suits your convenience. Did you have complaint of not getting time from Bapu any time?

The date for the Working Committee meeting is not yet fixed. In case Bapu specified a particular date for you to come down here, I shall certainly let you know.

Your two telegrams dealing with Parnerkar have arrived. He is due here now. In the normal course of things he would have returned to Dhulia.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

## 13

CALCUTTA,  
February 8, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Immediately I wrote to you my last letter, I realised that it was stupid on my part to have inquired whether you had gone on tour. I have been reading the *Harijan* regularly and also your articles, which could have reminded me that you were with Bapu all the time in his Travancore tour. I realised this carelessness after the letter was despatched.

Why did you put this question to me, "Did you have complaint of not getting time from Bapu any time?" I don't think my last letter contained the slightest suggestion of that kind. When I inquired on which dates Bapu was likely to be free I simply wanted to make sure that my dates did not clash with those of the Working Committee. Besides this he might have made some other engagements either political or of other nature and I simply wanted to avoid those dates. However, now

that everything is indefinite, I will choose my own time unless Bapu fixes some definite dates for me.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

14

WARDHA,  
February 10, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your kind letter. It was my unfortunate Hindi that seems to have made you wonder why I put you a stupid question. I simply meant to say that Bapu would find time for you whenever you came—I mean even when the W.C. members were here, for he never gives them all his time. The W.C. meeting date is not yet fixed. Perhaps it will be about the 24th. Bapu says you may come whenever you like. He is not likely to go out until the 20th of April, when he has to leave for Belgaum for the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh.

Makhanlal Chaturvedi's paper publishes an article by a Jyotishi wherein he discusses the position of various planets in Bapu's horoscope and says that the period between 20th April and August 27 is the most critical in Bapu's life, and that he is not likely to survive! Why must these people start sensations of this kind?

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev



15

CALCUTTA,  
February 12, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your letter.

I hope to reach Wardha some time during this month. I am not fixing up any date at the moment, but if possible, I will try to avoid the dates on which the Working Committee meets. Or probably I may come on those very dates because in that case I will be able to meet Sardar and also Rajaji.

Why should Makhanlal have allowed such stupid articles to appear in his paper? Our people seem to have lost all sense of decency.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M.D. DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

16

BIRLA HOUSE,  
MALABAR HILL,  
BOMBAY,  
February 27, 1937

PUJYA BAPU,

With reference to your article in the *Harijan* in connection with the Ahmedabad award and apropos our discussion on the subject, I have the following observations to make. I fear there are practical difficulties in the way of putting the principle envisaged by you into effect without the intervention of the state, and there are greater difficulties still for one to act individually.

But for me to understand the position fully, a complete scheme is necessary. If such a scheme is prepared, it would provoke thoughts and eventually may lead to some very good

results. It is in order to assist that I am putting forward a few posers.

First of all, what is your standard of minimum wage? The following necessities may be called essential for an adult person:

<i>Article</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Calories</i>	<i>Price</i>
Pulses & grain	12 Chhatanks	1300	Rs.0-0-11
Ghee	1 "	500	0-1-0
Milk	4 "	150	0-0-6
Sugar	2 "	400	0-0-4½
		<hr/> 2350	0-2-9½
		100	0-1-2½
		<hr/> 2450	0-4-0

Or monthly Rs. 7-8-0.

The expense in the Harijan Ashram, Delhi or in the Birla Hostel, Pilani is not more than this and so I think this a reasonable estimate of the food requirements of a man. The budget therefore of a man working in Delhi would be something like this:

Food	Rs. 7-8-0 per month
Kerosene oil	1-0-0 "
Rent	1-8-0 "
Cloth 100 yds per year	1-4-0 "
	<hr/> 11-4-0
And miscellaneous	Rs. 1-4-0 will make the total
	Rs. 12-8-0.

Now you suggest that as every one man, besides himself, has 1½ persons dependent on him, the minimum wage should be compiled on the basis of expenses of 2½ persons. If this is accepted, then expenses for further 1½ persons have to be added up. This would not be on the basis of Delhi scale since among the dependents there would be children, and also those living in a village. If for another 1½ persons we take the budget at the rate of Rs. 9 per man, which in my opinion should be enough, then the total budget of a man would be Rs. 12-8-0 plus Rs. 13-8-00 or a total of Rs. 26.

This according to you, if my calculation is accepted, should be the minimum wage. I have calculated the average wage of the Birla Cotton Mill's worker and I find we employ about 2700 men and the average wage comes to Rs. 26. The highest paid are the line jobbers who draw above Rs. 100 per month and the lowest paid are the doffing boys who draw Rs. 12 per month. If a minimum wage is fixed, then naturally it will have to be uniform at least for equal age. This would mean that the wages of many will have to be reduced and of others will have to be increased.

We came to the conclusion that the depreciation should be the first charge on the mills. Now roughly the valuation of the Birla Mill today would be about 35 lakhs, and as the mill is working double shift, the depreciation would be 10% on machinery and 5% on building. This would amount to 3 lakhs of rupees per year. We have never in the life of the mills earned more than this. Average of the last 16 years would be much less than this.

The Birla Mill I think would represent for present not for past—an average typical Indian mill. If that be so, then the textile industry at present does not earn more than its depreciation, if all taken together. There are of course better and worse mills. If the depreciation be the first charge, then the first three lakhs in the case of the Birla Mill would go for depreciation. The second charge would be minimum wage which would be according to the above calculation Rs. 26 per man per month. The third would be reserve, fourth probably managing agents' commission and the fifth dividend.

Thus there would hardly be any possibility for the shareholders to get any dividend. And so far they have rarely had dividends and when we paid, it was out of depreciation fund. I admit that one of my mills financially is much better off than the Birla Mill but then another one is still worse.

Wages of an unskilled worker in districts may be taken as from 4 to 6 annas per day. Wage of a domestic servant is not more than Rs. 10 to 12 per month in up country and between 15 to 20 rupees in towns like Calcutta. If 26 is considered to be the minimum wage in a factory, then there will be great disparity between the industrial worker on the one hand and the farm labour and domestic servant on the other hand. Dis-



parity there must be but such a big one is rather abnormal and cannot last long.

Under the existing circumstances and from the point of view of resources of the general industry, the wage of Rs. 26 per month will, I fear, be the maximum and not the minimum limit. It is not an unreasonable position taking in view the fact that income per capita in India is so low and the pay of lower Government servants is in great many cases much lower than Rs. 25 per month. If minimum wage is to be fixed in industries, then why not also in other employing agencies including the Government? And can the State afford to do this in Railway, Military and everywhere at a figure of Rs. 26? I do not mean to say that there is a case of reduction in wages. I only wish to point out that as a minimum wage this will be too high a figure. And perhaps you would insist on still high a figure. But where is the money? You cannot reduce 4 out of 3.

But suppose this difficulty is solved by reducing the minimum wage to say Rs. 20 per month, what would be the result of such a policy? Every mill will pay Rs. 20 as the minimum wage and then extra wages would be paid according to profits of the different mills. And also suppose that my mill is making no profit and a neighbouring mill is making good profit because it has new machinery and is a bigger unit. The result would be that the worker in my mills would be getting the minimum wage of Rs. 20 per month only, whereas the worker of the neighbouring mills would be getting say Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 per month. Naturally I would not be able to draw labour for my mills and the result may be that I may have to close it down. If you say that the worker under such circumstances would work even on starvation wage, I ask, "Are we today in a position to induce the worker to take such a course?" This brings in the necessity of State intervention.

As I have said above, if we take a general census of all the Indian mills today, we shall find that they don't earn more than the depreciation on their block and the wage that they pay would come to an average of Rs. 25 per month. This in my opinion is a fair position. But if wages are to be increased further, this could only be done by rationalisation, which would mean throwing away so many men out of employment, although in any case rationalisation, even if it be something

undesirable, is bound to come.

I do not pooh-pooh the idea suggested by you, but I am simply pointing out the practical difficulties which a millowner has to face. From my own point, I do not see how to solve them. Your suggestion can only be helpful in introspection.

But while I do not see the possibility of fixing minimum wage at a high figure, I think it is possible to do various other things which in their cumulative effect can give a good deal of comfort to the workers. They are as follows:

1. Stability of job.
2. Removal of corruption.
3. Human treatment.
4. Free medicine.
5. Free education to workers' children.
6. Better housing.
7. Social welfare work.
8. Milk supply to workers' children.
9. Old age pension.
10. Sickness allowance.
11. And last but not least establishment of personal touch.

A number of these things, viz., 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7 are already being done in my mills but in more or less mechanical way. There is no personal touch. And in fact whatever existed—it did exist at one time—has disappeared during the last two years. Workers are getting good wages, there is the welfare work, but no personal touch. Partly it is due to communistic preaching which has reacted on both sides and partly due to lack of proper men to look after the welfare work. But still I think that it is possible to do much more than what is being done today and for the last few months, I have been discussing the matter with my managers with much seriousness. We are not sleeping over the matter, but how far we will succeed time alone will show. Social welfare work is sometimes misunderstood, but that of course is irrelevant. Some people call it a stunt of the capitalist for great exploitations of the worker.

In any case, please let me have your criticisms on all that I have said. If I am arguing against your suggestions, please do not misunderstand. I have to satisfy my own conscience and



also the financial needs of the mills under me. An unsuccessful managing agent can neither give comfort to his workers nor can he attract confidence of his shareholders. Everything in the end collapses and with it the employment of so many men.

Free development of those industries which cannot be undertaken in cottage and thus replace the foreign imports is not a small gain. If we put up the cost of production too high as to make it impossible for the industries to compete with imported goods, then it would not be an ultimate help to the country. But I am arguing only against any extreme proposal. I do not say that the workers today are overpaid or that there is any case for reduction of wages. But at the same time I do not admit that at an average they are underpaid, that millowners are making any great profit at their expense. If I had my way, I will maintain the wages at Rs. 26 but reduce the wages of weavers from Rs. 40 to Rs 30 and put up the wages of other workers from Rs. 12 or Rs. 20 to Rs. 18 and Rs. 22.

I may add here that the average wage of a worker in the Kesoram Mill will be a little lower than that of Delhi, and Gwalior will be somewhat between Kesoram and Delhi. In Kesoram the housing conditions, are not as good as in other mills, and welfare work also is not good. There have been serious financial difficulties in case of Kesoram. During the last thirteen years, except for once or twice it has never paid any dividend and even the dividend of the preference shareholder is in arrears. It has come only recently under my management and I am hopeful about the future. Delhi and Kesoram these two mills are very old and so their cost of production is very high.

The millowner has been criticised on several scores. He has been criticised on behalf of the consumer. Why does he want so much protection? The shareholder criticises him for mismanagement. And labour leaders criticise him for exploiting labour. Obviously all the criticisms could not be true. In my opinion the Textile Industry in India has been a great success. It has replaced Lancashire by providing cheap cloth. It has not been a failure from the investor's point of view, nor could it be said that the wages were maintained at a lower level as compared with Japan. But the chief criticism against the millowner which has never been levelled is that he is an extremely miserly fellow,



over-selfish and suffering from a morbid desire to accumulate wealth without making any good use of it. This applied to all capitalists. I agree with you that a man with brain and talent should use his virtues for service and not for his own comfort. He may not be able to manage his mills exactly on the lines you suggest but I have no doubt he could manage it as a trustee on behalf of the nation. If he can make sacrifice, he will himself adjust the management of his mills according to the needs of the nation.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

PUJYA SHRI MAHATMAJI  
SEGAON

## 17

### Interview with Viceroy

(Time : 11.30 a.m.; talked for 35 minutes.)

He asked about business and I told him that it was much better. He inquired if I was interested in motor business. I said, "No." He asked : "Was it your brother who had gone to Washington?" I said, "Yes." He then asked, "Are you not going yourself?" I said, "No." He said, "I said, I had heard a rumour that you were going to New York." I said, "The intention was to get some one interested in motor business which I intend to start." He asked, "What is your programme?" I said, "I want to make light cars and motor-buses and we think that if we can sell 12,000 cars per year, it would be economical. There is a saving of Rs. 1,000 in freight and duty which is a big thing." I suggested the advisability of Englishmen interesting themselves in Indian business only financially and leaving the management to Indians. I pointed out how in Jute and Cotton we had found out that their cost of production was much higher. He agreed and said that he knew that our cost of production was much lower.

But I said I had gone to him to talk politics, and he said, "Come along. We are old friends and we can talk to each other in confidence. In case you don't want anything to go out, you can rely on me." I replied that he could equally trust me and if he did not want anything to go to Mr. Gandhi, I could preserve his confidence. He said, "I know, but what I want to tell you just now is not such a thing as you need not tell Mr. Gandhi. I am glad that the Congress has come in a majority. I am not at all surprised. I knew it. But my men did not know it. I had English experience. I knew that there was no other party in the field, Congress was well organised and that they could appeal to the public and so they deserved the victory. I am only surprised that in Bombay they are not in a majority. I wish they could have got ten more seats." I told him that that was due to Maharashtra where the Congress was not in full touch with the rural population. He agreed.

Then I said, "What next? You might have heard how the Congress is moving. I am coming from Wardha and therefore I know Gandhiji's mind. His position is something like this. You people have all along in your public speeches been telling us that we are going to have genuine power. You have put safeguards no doubt but you have always said that they are to be treated only as insurance against risk. Now Gandhiji wants to take you at your word and he says that unless we come to wreck the constitution or do something directly against your very existence, don't use the safeguards. Allow us to work." He said, "I quite realise the position. In fact in substance the difference between Gandhiji's position and my own position does not at all exist. Englishmen are sensible men and after having given this constitution, if they allow the Congress to have full freedom to work the constitution, where is it going to lead to? If we poke our nose and create a deadlock, you will go back to the voters and then come back again in a majority. So we don't want to use safeguards merely for the sake of fun. But if you come in and say: "We are going to wreck the constitution, then of course the safeguards must be used. I can therefore make any public declaration that you want, assuring my sympathy and goodwill, and you will be astonished to hear what I have told my own Governors about this, but if anybody wants to me say that the safeguards are to be suspended, it is



impossible. I cannot do it because I have no power to change the constitution, and I fear we would be misunderstood. Because if anybody comes and says "Suspend the safeguards" and I say "We can't," then the whole Indian Press will say that the safeguards are to rule which is not to be a fact. So I am rather anxious about the position." I pointed out that so far as I understood, Gandhiji did not want the constitution to be changed, but he wanted a gentleman's agreement. I said, "I visualise the provincial Congress leaders being sent for by the Governors, but the former would put forward only the set formula of the Congress to the Governors to which the latter would simply say, 'No.' And the provincial leaders are all second rank men except in Madras where we have got Rajgopalachariar." He interrupted and said, "I knew you would make this exception." I proceeded and said, "Is it not therefore possible to shift the venue from provinces to Delhi because then there could be a more intelligent discussion ? It would not be difficult to find out a solution." I further told him that if he met Gandhiji, the latter would put his case in much stronger language than I did, but at the same time, he would be able to find out a formula, but I did not know that position could be brought about. He said, "It is rather a difficult task. If Gandhi comes to me today, (he was informed Gandhiji was going to see him) he could talk only this particular thing. Six months back he could have come on different mission, but my men did not advise me to establish personal contact with them. If he comes after a week even, the position may be different. But at present what would I tell him except what I have told you?" I said that he was misinformed. Mr. Gandhi was not at all coming and even to Delhi he was coming at the request of Jawaharlal but I pointed out to him the implications of all that was likely to happen. He himself has to exercise his brain and find out a solution. He said, "I realise that Mr. Gandhi could not see me today, nor can I see how could I invite him. And yet I feel that the difference between us does not exist. I hope he knows it pretty well that there is no personal misunderstanding between us." I assured him on that point.

The talk was rather inconclusive because while he was very cordial and in a way radical in his views which could not have been better expressed by me, he could not see what he



could do. When I attacked Service and pointed out how in U.P. and the Frontier Province they took actual sides against the Congress, he did not defend it. He again and again pointed out his satisfaction and at Congress victory. He assured that he was not going to allow any Governor to use his power, but except for this as assurance of sympathy and goodwill which he could give even publicly, he did not see how the safeguards could actually be suspended. And at the same time he saw that Gandhiji did not want constitutional suspension.

About Jawaharlal he talked and said, "Am I correct in assuming that there is a strong personal affection between Gandhi and Jawaharlal? I said, "Yes." He said he thought that Jawaharlal too had an assured position in the country and asked, "Would Gandhiji rise against Jawaharlal if the latter disagreed with him on any compromise?" I replied, "Jawaharlal would simply follow." He accepted the view. Later on we talked about the Birla College. He promised to look into the things.

## 18

March 12, 1937

DEAR LORD HALIFAX,

Your speech delivered at the East India Association was read in India with the interest that it deserved. I need not tell Your Lordship what weight your views carry with the Indian public opinion. But allow me to repeat what I said to you in London last time that on its sheer merits the reform cannot succeed, nor can it fail merely on its demerits. It all depends on the atmosphere and at present it is pretty bad. Until spirit of mutual trust and friendship—I saw plenty of it in England and equally find it missing in Government circles in India—is created, no reform, however radical it may be, would ever succeed.

What has been wanting all these years is a human contact between the two "partners". During the whole history of British rule in India, you were the only one to realise the great value of such a contact and you took a step which was im-

mediately reversed after your departure from this country. I tried with Lord Willingdon and failed. When I returned from England, I was full of great hopes. But it appears that Lord Linlithgow was advised not to take any step because—so I was told—establishment of personal contact at the stage would mean throwing the Viceroy's weight on the side of the Congress. I felt greatly disappointed. I wrote to Lord Lothian last August and I requested him to show my letter to Your Lordship, how in my opinion a great opportunity for preparing a better ground for the inauguration of the new Act was being lost.

I wish I could share your feelings that the services will show the "readiness to adjust themselves to changed conditions". So far I do not see any sign of it. In U.P. and the Frontier Province the provincial governments during the elections more or less openly took sides against the Congress. It is in the atmosphere of hostility and distrust that the Congress is approaching the question of office acceptance. And I hope you will make due allowances, when you criticise in your mind the inability of the people here to share the optimism of our friends in England, by taking all these factors into consideration.

I know something of Gandhiji's mind. He is in favour of acceptance of office provided there was goodwill and sympathy of the old "partners", and an assurance forthcoming from them that the reforms would be allowed to be worked without interference. You know his pet phrase "change of heart". And he does not find that "change" so far. And how could you criticise him? Just imagine the new "partners" coming to take change of the business without any personal contact with the old "partners", who have not been at all friendly so far! And so I fear a deadlock in the near future. When the provincial Congress leaders are invited by the provincial Governors to form cabinets, what will they have to say except the set answer framed by the central authority in the Congress? And the Governors as well as the provincial Congress leaders both being men of second importance would be unable to deliver the goods. In fact even an intelligent discussion will be impossible.

Only a personal contact between the Viceroy and Gandhiji can improve the position. It can give the so much needed assurance to the Congress that Great Britain with all its sympathy and goodwill wants to help India to move forward, and that to use



your own words “the provinces will henceforward have full power to regulate their own concerns”. On the other hand, it will give the service an assurance that the Congress is a friend and not a foe and that it should be given a chance to make even mistakes. Such a position alone can make the service understand the need to “adjust themselves to the changed conditions”.

As it is, I see India clearly drifting towards direct action. Gandhiji is strenuously trying to prevent such a contingency, but what can he do when there is no response from the other side?

Sir Samuel Hoare once wrote to me that safeguards should not be interpreted as a hindrance but an insurance against risk. I agree. But the atmosphere here does not encourage one to put such a happy interpretation. So we come back to the same point. Personal touch. This alone can clear the atmosphere and I am sure it can clear it once for all.

Please excuse me for this encroachment on your time. But I cannot help it. I know you understand India and this is my only excuse. I have also spoken again to the Viceroy. I think he agrees but does not see any feasible approach towards the matter.

With kindest regards,

*I remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas Birla*

THE RT. HON'BLE  
THE VISCOUNT OF HALIFAX

## 19

D.O. No. 1708 Com.

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
March 15, 1937

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letter of today and for the cuttings enclosed in it which I have shown to His Excellency, who asks



me to thank you for the trouble you have taken and say that he entirely understands the position.

I will, if I may, come to tea tomorrow about 5 o'clock unless I hear from you that this would be inconvenient for you.

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

20

March 15, 1937

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

I saw for the first time yesterday the contents of the enclosed cuttings that appeared in the *Tribune* and the *National Call* of the 5th and the 6th March, respectively. And when I further read the *Tribune* of the 14th containing another story by its New Delhi special correspondent, I immediately contradicted the canard.

During my interview with His Excellency, when he referred to certain Press propaganda, I did not quite follow him as before that I had not seen the *Tribune* of the 5th and the *National Call* of the 6th. It is all disgusting and I would be extremely sorry if all this embarrassed His Excellency.

I understand that these telegrams were sent by Durgadas and Aiyanger and I have strongly protested to them against using my name in this fashion. I hope you will convey this to His Excellency.

More when we meet tomorrow. With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

J.G. LAITHWAITE, ESQ.  
NEW DELHI

## 21

March 17, 1937

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

As you have seen Gandhiji's formula has been finally accepted by the Working Committee and I have no doubt that it will be accepted also by the A.I.C.C. The onus to state publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers rests now on the Chief Minister after he has satisfied himself on this point and therefore makes the matter much easier for the Governor. It also does not preclude discussion between the Governor and any other important leader whom the Chief Minister may like to accompany him, which will enable intelligent discussion.

"Within the constitution" is a very important phrase which gives in my opinion counter guarantee on the part of the Congress that there is no desire to create deadlocks for the sake of deadlocks. If the Governors would be sympathetic, then I hope there should be no difficulty in arriving at a proper undertaking. I think this is a great triumph for the right wing of the Congress and a counter response would very much strengthen their hands. I hope His Excellency appreciates the position.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

J.G. LAITHWAITE, ESQ.

C.I.E.

NEW DELHI

22

D.O. No. 1844-G.M.

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
March 18, 1937

DEAR MR BIRLA,

Many thanks for your letter of yesterday. I write to say that I have shown it to H.E. and that he has read it with much interest.

With kind regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

G.D. BIRLA, ESQR.

23

HARIJAN NIWAS,  
DELHI,  
March 22, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

Parmeshwariprasad has expressed his readiness to take possession of the farm, etc. at once. Will you please sign the relevant documents ?

M.K. GANDHI

24

HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH,  
KINGS WAY,  
DELHI,  
March 30, 1937

PUJYA BAPUJI,

Today I am writing this to you after a great deal of hesitation. When Ghanshyamdasji was at Wardha in the last week of



February and had stayed there for a whole week he had discussion about transferring Malkani but the result of that talk was that he felt disappointed. He was not in favour of keeping Malkani in Delhi but when his idea was not approved he felt sore about it and ceased taking the sort of interest in the Harijan Industrial Home work he used to evince formerly. The experiments he was keen on making have already been made at Pilani. There has been some difference of opinion between him and Malkani and I felt it my duty to write to the principal authority about it. Malkani's character has been above reproach and he has impressed those who happened to come in contact with him greatly. Ghanshyamdasji also did not pay much heed to the trivial grievances of the Harijans. His nature is different; in fact he did take personal interest in the progress of the Harijan Industrial Home, but when he found that things were not done according to his wishes, his interest waned. Thereafter it so happened that a simple lady like Rameshwari Nehru felt aggrieved on the score of Malkani. Was it not surprising? In case this strikes you as odd I would like you to send this letter to Ghanshyamdasji. But if you do not feel that way, you will naturally adopt the better course. Just now Malkani has been on a visit to Hyderabad and is likely to return on the 10th. Ghanshyamdasji is back from Pilani and has gone to Okara. After his stay in Delhi he should feel better at Madras. He has asked me to inform you.

*Bandemataram from  
Amritlal*

Birla had told you that he was ready to relieve Malkani, but he told Pole, "No, no, don't send him away; he is required here."

## 25

March 31, 1937

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

I read your broadcast speech and I hope you also have read Gandhiji's interview published today, a copy of which I enclose

herewith. Both of you think alike when you anticipate “repression subsequent to civil disobedience movement” and he anticipated a “rule of the sword”. And both of you, I know, would hate such a position. I know Gandhiji’s mind definitely and can assure you that he, without any reservation, wants to put a stop to any kind of direct action once for all. In his interview also he says clearly that the acceptance of his formula “might have prevented the crisis and resulted in the *natural, orderly and peaceful transference of power* from bureaucracy to the largest and fullest democracy known to the world”.

I dare say Lord Linlithgow also thinks in a similar language. And yet the greatest tragedy is being enacted in India due to lack of personal touch. I ask was it not possible or is it not even now possible for men at the helm of affairs to meet and talk and thus remove mutual misunderstanding and suspicion? There is in India a genuine misunderstanding and suspicion for which there is plenty of justification, I had written to you at great length during August last when I thought that a great opportunity had been lost. And even now I wish to say that personal meeting alone can solve the tangle.

The present position reminds me of a Britisher, who is in my employment, who married a Hungarian girl last year while he was in Europe. The girl did not know English nor the husband knew Hungarian. When I asked as to how they both decided to marry and understood each other’s intentions, they replied that they tried to express themselves by drawing sketches. The marriage of course has been very unhappy as it was bound to be. But in our case neither India nor Great Britain suffers from want of knowledge of its “partner’s” language. They need not therefore talk by drawing sketches. It is hardly businesslike or human to talk through Press and broadcast. Cannot the Viceroy meet and talk? I can understand the hesitation if there was a real difference and mental reservation on both sides. If that were so, then one would have the consolation to feel that big men did not mean what they said. But if, as I, believe, there is no substantial difference as regards the goal, it is hardly wise to avoid meeting, although I fear the Service here may dislike the idea.

I am sending these unwanted letters because I cannot help it. You may or may not take any notice of them,

With kindest regards,

*I remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas Birla*

THE RT. HON'BLE THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
LONDON

26

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
April 2, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

What is all this? I do not at all insist that Malkani should be retained. If his departure can contribute to a betterment of the Harijan Niwas, this should be brought about as part of our duty. Therefore, please do what you think to be the best.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

27

D.O. No. 2251-G.M.

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
April 2, 1937

DEAR MR. BIRLA,

Thank you very much indeed for your kindness in sending me the copy of your letter to Lord Lothian. I have shown it to His Excellency, who has read it with great interest and has asked me to thank you very much for letting him see it.

With kindest regards,

*Yours sincerely,  
J.G. Laithwaite*

G.D. BIRLA, ESQ.



28

MAHATMA GANDHI  
WARDHA

April 4, 1937

AM SURPRISED AT THAKKARBAPA'S LETTER. NO BASIS. LETTER FOLLOWS. HE HAS SURELY MISUNDERSTOOD. WE HAD CLEAR TALK AND I FULLY AGREED WITH YOU. THERE WAS NEVER ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US ON THIS POINT.

GHANSHYAMDAS

29

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
April 5, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Subsequent to my yesterday's letter to Bapu, I talked to Thakkar Bapa on phone. He immediately saw that he was led into believing something which did not exist. When I asked him how he got the impression because we had never talked, he said that Hariji had given him the impression. And so I got Thakkar Bapa and Hariji both today at my house to talk, but before they came, they had seen through their mistake and so Thakkar Bapa said that he would write to Bapu and explain the position.

Bapu is not keeping good health and I was surprised that he should have built up an edifice on imaginary foundations. Perhaps it was due to his ill health. I have already written to Bapu yesterday and am writing this again to say that I never misunderstood his attitude and there was no room for any disagreement and that Malkani was kept with my full concurrence and so there was no question of my feeling disheartened. It is

true that I do not take direct interest in the Industrial Home, but I explained to Thakkar Bapa that I did not take direct interest in his office work too. If I begin to do this, I would come in clash. I help only when my help is needed and Thakkar Bapa comes to me very often whereas Malkani never comes. But that is entirely his job. So far as I am concerned, I never go out of my way to take interest in any of their fields, and Thakkar Bapa agreed that it was so.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

### 30

April 10, 1937

DEAR LORD LOTHIAN,

The enclosed cutting will show you the reaction in India on Lord Zetland's speech. Your speech was very good but Lord Zetland, if anything, has further spoilt the situation. I wish he would not have spoken at all. You will find an unanimous disapproval of his speech in which even the *Statesman* is included. In fact the *Statesman's* article hits the point. Lord Zetland's speech has further strengthened the hands of Jawaharlal who had immediately issued a statement intention of which seems to be to prevent Gandhiji from doing anything conciliatory. And after the speech of Lord Zetland, even Gandhiji cannot take any action. This is how the big affairs are managed! What an efficient manner !

Evidently you get my last letter with its cuttings before you made your speech in the House of Lords because you have quoted *Tribune* and also those persons of Gandhiji's interview to

which I had specially drawn your attention. Now could you advice me if anything is possible to be done? If both sides stick to their position nothing is possible, but could any via media be found? My mind is not at all clear, but if you give me any useful suggestion, I should like to work towards that end. Perhaps like myself you are equally blank.

I will try to see the Viceroy again before I leave Delhi. I hope to be in England about the middle of June in connection with the Indo-British Trade Treaty negotiations and when I am there I hope to call on you.

With kindest regards,

*I remain,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas Birla

THE RT. HON. THE MARQUESS OF LOTHIAN  
SEMOUR HOUSE  
17 WATERLOO PLACE  
LONDON, S.W. 1

### 31

BOMBAY,  
April 12, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

What a blunder Thakkar Bapa has committed! As a matter of fact as soon as his letter arrived, I told Bapu that all this must have been the result of some grave misunderstanding inasmuch as you yourself had said in so many words that you were not inclined to bid good bye to Malkani just yet.

Now about the Parmeshwari Prasad episode. Bapu has written to him warning him that "if I find any blemish in your character I should feel deeply hurt."



Have you seen the response to Lord Zetland's peroration? Let us wait and see how the situation develops. One thing seems crystal clear: a clash is inevitable. What he says was in effect a challenge.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* We are all due to leave for Belgaum.

32

SEGAON,  
April 13, 1937

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter of the 11th arrived here only today.

Some three or four days back I had come across a report of your speech. It was an earnest effort to awaken a sense of loyalty to traditional moral values. I enjoyed the whole of it immensely. I am hunting for a fuller text locally, but in case you have got one and can spare it with ease, please do so.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

33

BIRLA HOUSE,  
LALGHAT,  
BENARES,  
April 16, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your letter.

As you will see, I have come to Benares and am going to Calcutta shortly. As regards Parmeshwari Prasad I have already

explained the situation in my yesterday's letter to Gadodia, a copy of which has been sent to Bapu.

With reference to the political crisis, please don't be impatient about the fight. Bapu's moderation has done a great good and the result is that today India is unanimous against Lord Zetland. To get the *Statesman*, *Times of India* and the European mercantile community in our favour is no small gain. Lord Lothian's suggestion of leaving the matter finally to the electorate is a very good one, but I don't think it will ever be accepted. Perhaps Bapu's formula of 'ordinarily' may some time be worked up.

The authorities in Delhi are most unhappy. My own reading is that Zetland and the cabinet is at the root of all this. If the present position is maintained, I think a solution must come out and with great honour. I hope the Working Committee will not nullify the atmosphere created by Bapu's moderation. He has put the whole of India in the right and his opponents in the wrong. His last wire to the *Times* was splendid. He had made clear that he does not stand on any false prestige.

I am keeping myself in touch with Delhi and England without 'teasing', as Bapu said it.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

### 34

CALCUTTA,  
April 22, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The strike fever in the Jute industry is not yet subsiding although my jute mill is still free from it. But for the last five or six days, there is a partial strike in the weaving department of the Kesoram Cotton Mill and I am writing this letter in connection with this strike. Please put my problem before Bapu.

The strike came suddenly without any one's knowledge and without receiving any notice. My own estimate is that wherever there is a strike without any obvious reason, it is always due to mismanagement or tactless handling on the part of the management. My Manager who is an honest but a tactless man may be held responsible for the strike so far as I am concerned. However immediately when I found that a number of weavers had struck work, I sent for the labour leader who in this case is Phani Babu, a lieutenant of Suresh Babu. I asked him what was the reason for strike, what was their demand and if there was anything to be settled, I was ready. He said that the demand was recognition of Union, return of security money, which was deposited by the workers as a token of good behaviour, after the strike of 1935, and no overwork. I told him that I had not the slightest objection to recognising their Union. As regards return of security money, I told him that if the Union could take charge of the workers, I had no objection to returning the money. And overwork, I said, I would never tolerate, and if the jobbers insisted on overworking occasionally, the workers could refuse to do so and they would have my full support.

Phani Babu then brought some leading workers to my office and had a talk with the manager, but in the second talk Phani Babu pointed out that he had misunderstood the position of the workers who he said also wanted 25% increase in their wages. My manager on my behalf told him that no question of increment was going to be entertained since we were not in a position to pay higher wages. The company had not paid dividend during the last 12 years except once or twice and that the time was not such that wages could be increased. But my manager told Phani Babu on my behalf that if the mill would show better results in future, as I hoped it would, we would be quite prepared to discuss the question of their wages to mutual satisfaction. Phani Babu was satisfied with this position and I am informed that he asked the workers to resume work but without any result.

I waited for further two days, but I found that the workers were still adamant. There is not a complete strike, but those who come to work are being intimidated. On the other hand, there are a number of workers living in our chawls who are not coming to work. The manager has put up a notice asking those



who don't want to work vacate houses. I have told the manager not to take any action beyond putting up the notice. Usual notices have also been put up asking those who are on strike to take away their wages and leave the mill's chawls so that we could recruit new workers.

I have tried the method of persuasion and have failed. Even the labour leaders have failed. Now, either I should import workers from other places under police protection and thus break the strike or I must surrender on the question of increment of wages. I cannot increase the wages and I don't like also to import workers from outside. So, I am still running after Shibnath Banerji and other labour leaders. I am now baffled. I wonder whether I could get some moral tip in such a complicated position.

Please don't put this letter before Bapu, if you find him very busy. I have written this just to think aloud.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

35

SEGAON,  
April 23, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

As desired by Bapu I am herewith sending you a letter that he has received. Could it be all true? The letter does make painful reading. You will write to him, of course, at your convenience concerning it.

Bapuji has noted the action you have taken with regard to Shri Parmeshwari Prasad and is satisfied with it. We are leaving here on the morning of the 25th instant by the Grand Trunk Express for Allahabad where Bapu has been summoned for the W. C. Meeting. We return here on the 29th, and about the 10th

proximo go to Yethal for nearly a six weeks stay with the Sardar who needs Bapu's assistance there in connection with several knotty problems that face him. Incidentally he hopes thereby to "administer" some much needed rest to Bapu and protection from the gruelling heat of June for which Wardha is notorious.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

### 36

CALCUTTA,  
April 26, 1937

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I am sending Mr. Anandan's letter to the Manager, Sutlaj Cotton Mills, Okara. I cannot believe that all what he has written could be true. The reason is this.

Mr. Anandan has been keeping himself in touch with me by writing letters off and on. When I went to Okara, he met me and I asked him whether he was quite comfortable and he told me that he was. He said he did not like the job and asked me if I could appoint him as a travelling agent in South India. I told him that it was not possible for cloth of a mill situated in North India to be sold in South India and therefore appointing him a travelling agent for South India would be useless. He insisted if I could give some selling work in North India because he said he would like that work more than working as a clerk. I told him it was not possible because in the first place it requires technical knowledge and in the second place we don't appoint commission agents without deposits from them.

In none of my mills I have got orthodox managers and therefore when he says that he is looked upon by the mill employees as an object of contempt and ridicule, I must say I cannot believe it. But I am sending his letter to the manager who will have a talk with him and ask him to substantiate his

charges. In case what he has written is found to be correct, I will of course take action.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

37

OKARA,  
April 27, 1937

MY DEAR MAHATMA,

I understand that you have forwarded my letter to Mr. Birla, I did not write that letter in the form of a complaint.

I look upon you as my only guidance in life and I worship you every day. As such, I hope I have a claim over you and I disclosed some of my difficulties just as if a son would to a father. I am sure you forwarded the letter to Mr. Birla out of your love for me, but now an enquiry is likely to be made with the result that it will only tend to make my situation a little more worse.

Mr. Birla on his last visit here had kindly asked me if I am happy here and I replied in the affirmative, because I did not want to take these trifling affairs to the notice of the paramount power and I knew how to adjust myself according to circumstances.

*I am,*  
*ever your devotee,*  
M. P. Anandan



38

8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUTTA,  
May 1, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The partial strike in the Kesoram Cotton Mill is still continuing and the labour leaders have been working without any result. The last offer that I have given them is this that the workers should resume work immediately and put up the question of wages before the arbitrators. I have suggested the name of Rajendra Babu or Tandonji as Umpire in case the arbitrators fail to agree. Shibnath Banerji and others have approved of the suggestion, but yet I don't think they will be able to influence the workers. I feel that the influence of the labour leaders holds good only for inciting the workers to strike and not for any other purpose. I will perhaps have to work independently, but as the strike fever is spread very wide in Calcutta just now, it will take some time before the strikers resume work. I only hope that I will not have to declare a lockout because in that case further to four thousand men will be thrown out in the street.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M. D. DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

39

BIRLA BROS. LTD.,  
CALCUTTA,  
May 1, 1937

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA (C. P.)

IS BAPU STAYING IN GUJARAT THROUGHOUT MAY? WRITE PROGRAMME.

GHANSHYAMDAS

WARDHAGANJ,  
May 1, 1937

GHANSHYAMDASJI  
CARE LUCKY  
CALCUTTA

LEAVING HERE NINTH. STAYING GUJARAT WHOLE MAY.

MAHADEV

40

*Express Telegram*  
MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA

May 2, 1937

YOUR TELEGRAM. WHERE SHOULD I MEET BAPU BEFORE SAILING—  
GUJARAT OR WARDHA.

GHANSHYAMDAS

41

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
May 2, 1937

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

The dictates of morality would require you to tell the workers quite plainly that so long as they fail to pursue the path of justice the mills would remain idle; no new hands would be recruited. In case, however, they leave their quarters peacefully without creating a situation, you should feel free to get new men instead. This would be morally right as well as economically feasible. If you feel my answer fails to cover the situation you may write to me again.

I am leaving for Bardoli on the 9th and hope to be at Borsad on the 12th. The Working Committee meeting of Harijan Sevak Sangh may as well be held at Tithal.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

42

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA (C. P.),  
May 4, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Not knowing your date of sailing, I could not give you a more definite reply. Bapu is fairly free of visitors nowadays and be easily seen here until the evening of the 9th when we leave for Bardoli. In Bardoli I would ask you not to attempt to see him. He will be very busy going from one village to another and you may not even catch him there. Tithal is a nice little place, but as usual with Bapu he will convert it into a dharmashala and there will not be much peace or spare space left. But you will decide according to your convenience.

Bapu's moral tip you will have received by now. I do hope you will like it.

*Yours affectionately,  
Mahadev*

43

WARDHA,  
May 5, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I should have enclosed the accompanying letter with my letter to you yesterday. An earlier letter must have already led



you start some kind of an enquiry into the allegations that this gentleman had made. If it is a genuine case, I know it cannot meet with anything but justice at your hands and I have assured him that he need not be afraid of the consequences of having brought this matter to your attention through Gandhiji. I know the time is very short for any such enquiry to be instituted before your departure for Europe. But I hope you will entrust it to someone who can do justice to the poor, if he has been wronged.

Jamnalalji is in the thick of a defamation suit that he has filed against a newspaper. The newspaper has at its back the support of the orthodox and anti-Congress Brahmins in this province and they have engaged a famous but petty-fogging lawyer of Nagpur who is pestering Jamnalalji with a tedious and vexatious cross examination which seems to go on endlessly.

I expect to have your wire any day.

Have the strike-mongers been brought to reason?

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

SJT. GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE  
CALCUTTA

## 44

CALCUTTA,  
May 6, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am sailing on the 27th. I have only this morning received your letter. On receiving it, I feel that it would have been better had I gone to see Bapu at Wardha. Of course going to Tithal would save double travelling because in any case I have to go to Bombay. But from your letter it appears that there is not much accommodation at Tithal, but I would not need any accommodation. If there is no rain, I can easily sleep under the

sky. The only thing that I need is a trench lavatory for myself. I will bring my cook who will give me some food, or I can do without one if I can get what we get at Jamnalalji's place.

I am leaving this place for Benares on Monday and hope to reach Bombay about the 20th. After that I will go to Tithal. I hope this would meet with Bapu's approval.

I had already received his reply about the strike. His trip was most helpful. As I had anticipated, the labour leaders came back telling me that the abitration was not acceptable to the workers on whom they had no influence. But already the workers are coming back to their work except from quarters where they are intimidated. Intimidation as usual is going. Kesoram is full of notorious Muslim goondas and therefore it required a great deal of tact and intelligence to deal with them. But I have no doubt in my own mind that the manager also is at fault. I understand that his treatment with the workers has been too much mechanical and there was no personal touch. On the other hand my jute mill has been a bright spot since in spite of the efforts of the adjoining strikers there was no strike in my mills. And recently we had a meeting of the workers whom I addressed and I found that they were all very happy and contended. I asked them to form a Union which with great hesitation they have done.

From my experience of the last 20 years, during which period I had to deal with a number of strikes, I have invariably found that every strike is due to lack of personal touch between the workers and the management.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA

45

CALCUTTA,  
May 7, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Mr. Parmeswaran Pillai has written to me about the Cochin business. He wants financial help for carrying on propaganda work. I don't know how Bapu thinks about it, but personally I should not like to give undue importance to the order of Cochin. Perhaps thereby we would not help the cause. But I am not replying to Pillai until I hear from Bapu.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA

46

8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUTTA,  
May 7, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Regarding Mr. Anandan, it was Pyarelal who wrote to me. The enquiry has already been made and the result forwarded to Pyarelal. I wonder whether you have read it. But after this enquiry, Anandan is a bit upset. I have written to him that nobody is going to harm him and I am sure that the manager does not at all feel annoyed with him for having written to Bapu. But perhaps he is feeling a little embarrassed because a lot of what he wrote were not quite true. Please assure him, if you can, that he need not be worried about anything so long as he does his work honestly. But I have also written to him that in case he decides to go, he will be paid his railway fare to and from Okara and one month's pay.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA



8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUTTA,  
May 7, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

A lot of correspondence has been going on between myself on the one hand and Lords Lothian and Halifax on the other. Similarly I have been keeping myself in touch with Delhi through correspondence. Lords Lothian and Halifax both, assure me that nothing would be left undone to bring about an honourable understanding. I am keeping them well posted about Bapu's views in particular and Indian opinion in general. I have not left Churchill too in peace.

I wish however to be enlightened on one point. In one of his private interviews Bapu admitted the right of the Governors to interfere in some cases. Perhaps from the very beginning his attitude has been consistent since he used the word 'ordinarily'. But this idea is nowhere to be found in any of the Congress resolutions. The Allahabad resolution, while admitting that there was no intention to abortage the Government of India Act, does not admit the right of the Governors to interfere even in rare cases. How does Bapu reconcile this resolution with his own utterances? Does Bapu think that this idea of the Governors' right to interfere in rare cases was already there in the Allahabad resolution?

It was told by "Delhi" that the difficulty of a formula was that it might be misinterpreted by both parties at later stages. I had already replied to this personally and had also written to Lord Lothian. And now Lord Zetland also expresses the same fear in devising a formula. This makes it clear that Delhi's ideas were originated at Whitehall. Bapu has already replied to this point in one of his interviews. Perhaps someone might have told him of their misgivings. I don't know who would tell him because none who saw the Vicerory met Bapu. He might have anticipated but now that Zetland has said it so clearly, perhaps before my letter reaches, Bapu would have replied to this point.

The interview explaining 'discourtesy' to the Congress was not very clear. Bapu says, "I had thought that under autonomy Ministers got audiences of their Governors for the asking."

From this, one would infer that the Governors were asked for audiences and they refused. He did not mean this, but the point was not made clear.

If Bapu reconciled his own utterances, wherein he admits the right of Governors to interfere in rare cases, with the Allahabad resolution, will he allow me to make use of his letter, if I found it necessary?

Lord Zetland's speech is in my opinion an improvement on Butler's and is definitely a good speech. He says at one place, "The reserved powers, of which so much has been made by the Congress will not normally be in operation." And then again he repeats the statement made by Mr. Butler. In substance 'normally' is better than 'ordinarily'. But the setting is still wanting in cordiality. From all that I know from private letters, it is 75% misunderstanding and 25% mutual fear. That Great Britain is afraid of the Congress intentions has to be recognised.

I personally feel the difference has been very much narrowed down. Bapu by his masterly handling of the situation has made their task much easier. But I fear that even the last girder that is required to bridge the gulf will have to be placed by Bapu. English statesmen have proved that they lack in statesmanship and efficiency both. I cannot admire them for the way in which they have handled the situation. But we have to pay penalty even for their mistakes and so we have the double responsibility in a way. The things have so intensely been discussed that after Zetland's speech no Governor is safe if he dares interfere with his ministers.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHI DESAI  
WARDHA

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA (C.P),  
May 7, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter which I read out to Bapu as I happened to be by his side when it came. He was happy to feel that the moral tip was helpful and that there is no trouble so far as your own mill goes. The personal touch is all that is needed, and that is always lacking in these strikes. For instance the Ahmedabad millowners would think it infra dig. to speak to their mill hands. In London too the same untouchability seems to be rampant. *They will not have anything to do with Bapu, if they can help it.* Indeed I am told that Halifax has set his face against another pact and he is putting his whole weight against any negotiations. For example, look at Zetland's speech. Perhaps if he had said this right in the beginning there would have been no impasse. But now—I do not know. Bapu has given an interview today to Reuters which you will see in the paper before this reaches you and a similar one to the *London Times*.

I did not mean the discomforts you might have to put up with in Tithal. You are capable of putting up with any amount of inconveniences, I know. I meant overcrowding from the point of view of a quiet chat. That quiet will be absent. Otherwise of course, we will look after your comforts. The Tithal address will be Tithal, P.O. Bulsar (B.B & C.I. Rly.).

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Will you please tell Lakshminivas that I am sending him by a separate post *Bhagavad Gita* authorised by Bapu? I should have done it long ago!



MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA (C.P.),  
May 9, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Thank you for your very full letter regarding the situation. Bapu is making the way of Government clearer and easier every day as you will see from the interviews he has given since Zetland's speech in the Lords on the 6th instant. I enclose copies for ready perusal. See the sentence marked. Does it not reduce the Congress demand to a minimum, and a readily acceptable minimum? The assurance thus reduces itself to a promise not to compel ministers to resign but do dismiss them in moments of crisis. No Governor would be so stupid as to threaten dismissal every now and then. You must now carry on your correspondence on the light of the sentence marked and as you are in the thick of it, of course on your own personal initiative, you can even use the cable. For I think this last interview makes Government's position as easy as possible. But are you sure that they are anxious to help as they profess to be in their letters to you? My information is that it is Halifax who has set his face against any compromise. As the proverb runs : a burnt child dreads the fire, he seems to be advising the S.O.S. and others that in no case should a pact with Gandhi be repeated. Even the tone of the *London Times* is more conciliatory and deferential towards Bapu than Zetland's and Butler's—though of course Zetland's latest is ever so much better than his past utterances. If he had made this speech immediately after the Delhi Resolution without heaping those insults on the Congress the way would have been easier. Now we must cling to the minimum to which Bapu has reduced the Resolution. It was not expressly contained in the original resolution, but it was implied as Bapu has explained in several interviews—especially the one given to *Manchester Guardian* a fortnight ago.

Yours affectionately,  
Mahadev

8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUTTA,  
May 10, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Your letter of the 8th June now to hand.

You seem to be misinformed about the attitude of Lord Halifax. Here is a quotation from one of his letters to me, "I know, of course, very well what are all the difficulties on the side of creating personal contact, and I fully appreciate with you the immense of any such contact whenever it can actually be established. I should feel that at the present moment we were going through a particularly difficult period, that would, in fact, it might be hoped, be likely to be a good deal eased after the new Constitution is got going." The impression that I have got from a number of letters that I have received from Lords Lothian and Halifax is that the difficulty is what has been stated in the letter of Lord Lothian, a copy of which I enclose herewith. They are afraid, as I had already written to you, that their might be charges of bad faith on both sides. I do not agree with Lord Lothian, but we should know as well their fears too.

I can now see who wrote to Bapu about these fears. Evidently it was Lord Lothian himself. But after reading Lord Zetland's last speech, I don't feel inclined to agree with Bapu's last statement. His position has been so clear to me all along that, when I read Zetland's speech, I felt that there was hardly any difference between the two positions. And so when I read Bapu's interview on Zetland's speech, I felt that either I had misunderstood Bapu all along or perhaps his attitude has recently been stiffened. Even now my feeling is that I did not misunderstand but that his attitude has recently been stiffened. You also say that "had he, viz., Zetland, said this right in the beginning, there would have been no impasse". That shows that there is nothing wrong with the speech itself. Its defect is that it was delivered at a wrong moment.

I have in my experience found out that Bapu responds at once to one who talks friendliness. Zetland's manner in the beginning was far from it and if he is changed now, it is because of the pressure of the public opinion. But would it be the right



attitude for Bapu now to stiffen? If in substance, there is not much difference, as I and many others feel that there is very little, then certainly Bapu should now give a more favourable consideration to Zetland's speech. Bapu trusts too much when he trusts and similarly he gets over-stiff when he distrusts. He had justification for getting stiff in the beginning when he did not show any irritation. And now when the other side has begun to bend, he is beginning to get stiff. This is now I feel.

A letter today from Delhi says, "The position has now been fully clarified by the very friendly and extremely clear speech delivered by the Secretary of State which, in so far as there might be any doubt in the matter, should make the position clear beyond any question."

It should not be forgotten, and I had said this to Bapu as well as to the Viceroy, that meeting of second-rank men will always create difficulties as no one of either side would deliver the goods. Perhaps a meeting between Bapu and the Viceroy would have solved the tangle long ago. But somehow or other this position does not seem to be possible on account of certain fears entertained by the other side. Equal difficulties are likely to crop in at the second meeting between the Governors and the provincial leaders. So I fear the history will be repeated again. Unless therefore the tangle is solved on the basis of the Secretary of State's speech, before the Governors met the provincial leaders, a crisis would become inevitable. And it will be a tragedy if the crisis came after all this moderation of Bapu and the clarification on the part of the Secretary of State. After all this controversy the position is so much clarified that I cannot believe that the Governors will at all interfere unless our Ministers did something very foolish which I don't think they are likely to do. The situation therefore in my opinion demands a further review by Bapu.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
TITHAL



51

**True Copy of the Telegram Sent to Reuters, Bombay**  
(Interview with Gandhiji)

Asked as to what reaction Lord Zetland's speech had upon him Gandhiji replied : "So far as the tone is concerned it is an undoubted improvement upon his last speech on the subject. But I fear that it is no contribution to the removal of the deadlock. The last resolution of the Working Committee is the clearest possible annotation of the All-India Congress Committee's resolution in accordance with which assurances were asked. Now the world knows what was meant. Surely it is no strain upon the Constitution Act for Governors to give the assurance that whenever a situation is created which to them appears intolerable they will take upon their shoulders the responsibility of dismissing the ministers which they have the right to do instead of expecting them to resign or submit to Governor's wishes. Citing the performance of the ministries formed by the Governors in the face of universal opposition does not improve matters but strengthens suspicion. In my opinion the Congress is in earnest and wants to make serious effort if it takes office to make a substantial advance by that method towards its unequivocal goal of complete independence in so far as it is constitutionally possible to make that advance."

52

**True Copy of the Telegram Sent to the "Times", London**  
(By Gandhi)

As I have already said whilst Lord Zetland's recent speech in answer to Lord Snell's question is, so far as the tone is concerned, and improvement upon the last, it fails to satisfy the latest resolution of the Working Committee which needs no interpretation whatsoever. If the British Government is really

anxious that the Congress should take office wherever it has a clear majority there should be no hesitation in giving assurance asked for. If Lord Zetland is afraid of misunderstanding arising out of interpretation of any public assurances surely that would be also a reason for discountenancing acceptance of office by Congress leaders. For acceptance of office presupposes frequent interviews with Governors. These will be as much liable to misunderstanding and misinterpretations as the assurance asked for can be. But I hold that the resolution of the Working Committee on which speech is based has made it humanly impossible to give rise to any misunderstanding, and I have not found any lawyer to say that the giving of the simple assurance in terms of the Working Committee's resolution would mean any abrogation of constitution explicit or implied.

53

May 13, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your letter. I am also awaiting your reply to my second letter on the political situation.

The importance of dismissal vis-a-vis resignation is not yet fully appreciated by me. I will now have a talk with Bapu when I come to see him. Meanwhile this leading article from the *Statesman* will interest you. Perhaps you will show it to Bapu unless he has already read the same. It appears that an impression is gaining ground that there is something more subtle at the bottom of the simple utterance of Bapu than what could be read in the language itself. The man in the street thinks that Zetland's speech meets the point. I fear however that without personal discussion between the Viceroy and Bapu there is hardly any chance of a proper understanding.

Bapu has already replied to the arguments against the so-called charges of bad faith. This is good so far as it goes, but I don't see the light ahead. I have no doubt that neither side

wants a crisis, and yet we are moving towards it, slowly but certainly. More when we meet.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
TITHAL

54

TITHAL,  
*Via* BULSAR,  
May 13, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter about Cochin awaits a reply. We may not make light of the matter. It is serious enough in Bapu's opinion, and will need a considerable amount of propaganda. But it is clear that we may not finance it. This sort of spoon feeding cannot last long. However Bapu thinks you may ask Parmeshwaran Pillai to submit to you a detailed budget. We can then examine it and be in a better position to decide. We shall expect you here on the 20th.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

55

TITHAL,  
*Via* BULSAR,  
May 14, 1937

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your full letter of the 10th with the enclosure. Bapu read both the letter and the enclosure and says you are wrong



in thinking—as you seem to do with the *Statesman*—that he is now making an additional demand. He has made Government's work definitely easier by making the Congress demand free from ambiguity and no one can now say as Lord Z. has done that if an assurance were given it would lead to endless discussions about interpretation and allegations of breach of faith. If the bare assurance that Bapu has now reduced the Congress demand to is granted, there will be no questions of interpretation and no fear of breach of faith. I am surprised that you do not see this.

You seem to have read more meaning in my sentence than I had meant. I meant to say that if the speech had been made two months ago it would have gone a long way in bringing about an understanding. That is to say, from that statement to the assurance asked for by Bapu would have been a very easy step. He has publicly recognised the conciliatory tone in which the speech was couched, but it leaves him enough loop hole to say that he meant nothing more than is laid down in the Government of India Act. They must be prepared to face the fact that a new convention is being asked for by the party commanding the biggest majority in the country and it must be given.

Lord Lothians letter contains nothing new. He wrote a much longer letter to Bapu on similar lines.

But more when we meet.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

56

BIRLA HOUSE,  
MALABAR HILLS,  
BOMBAY,  
May 26, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have sent Bapu's argument to the proper quarters. While I admit that we can get a lot more in dismissal than in resigna-

tion, I feel that even dismissal is not an interference-proof thing. You might have yourself heard that in Bengal the ministers issued certain instructions to the magistrates about the prosecution against the strikers but they were not promptly carried out by the latter. Perhaps a threat of resignation on the part of the minister concerned set the matter right. But all the same it occurred to me that even in dismissal it would be possible for the Governor to interfere in an indirect manner. For instance the officers may not religiously carry out the policy of the Ministry and the Governor in spite of the assurance may refuse to dismiss the ministers. What would be the position of the minister in that case? He will have to resign. So ultimately it comes to resignation in case there is no co-operation on the part of the Governor above and the service below. I therefore am still of the same opinion that it would not be worthwhile to break.

Congress-minded non-Congressmen who have seen me whether in Calcutta or here don't at all appreciate this dismissal point of view. Every one says that it will be a great mistake not to accept ministry after Zetland's speech and I have also heard from very reliable sources that the Government have no desire to yield and are making preparations to bring into force Section 93 (a) in case Congress refuses to accept ministry.

Bapu should not get irritated at these preparations because all this will be done in a panic. I do not share the opinion that the Government have no desire to see the Congress accept office. In fact I think not only the Government have such a desire but with proper persons in the Cabinet it is possible to get the utmost co-operation from the Governors. But there is an impression in the Government circles that the Congress have no desire to accept office and as they want to wreck the constitution, they are putting forward all sorts of excuses. Thus mutual distrust is working. I therefore still hold the same opinion that it will be a great mistake to break after Lord Zetland's speech which in my opinion meets the point. I do not remember having entertained any doubt in the past about Bapu's decisions, but on this point I do entertain doubt and so I write this.

I am not a Congressman and therefore have no status in

this matter but I think it my duty to say this because perhaps Bapu may reconsider the situation.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI

57

TITHAL,  
BULSAR,  
May 26, 1937

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

It was good of you to write to me. My later statements do not in any shape or form alter my position. The formula about dismissal was enunciated in answer to the question as to how I would envisage interference by the Governors, since I admit that circumstances could be conceived when interference would be necessary, if the clause defining special powers of Governors was not abrogated. I then said that I did not contemplate an irremovable ministry except by an adverse vote of the house, but that I contemplated also dismissal by Governors when a difference arose between them and their ministers, which could not be got over by any reasoning. I preferred dismissal to voluntary resignation because I wanted the burden of dismissal to rest on Governors' shoulders. That would check or minimise pit-pricks and make the working of offices by a party which is frankly opposed to the Act and the British Imperial system tolerably smooth. Now, if the difference between dismissal and what Lord Zetland has offered is very little surely it is up to the Government to make up the difference rather than for the Congress to yield. To show that my original position is not at all altered, I would be entirely satisfied if assurances were given, as was contemplated, by the resolution of the A.I.C.C. The latest resolution of the Working Committee is but an interpretation of the A.I.C.C. resolution, not an advance or improve-



ment on it. I hope that this letter clears up all the points raised in your letter but if there is anything more, please do not hesitate to write to me.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi

58

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
May 26, 1937

MY DEAR RAMESHWARDAS,

Your letter has arrived.

Bachhraj & Company informed me about the money.

The rural development programme will absorb any amount up to Rs. one lac. This does not include the personal expenses.

Since Brijmohan is out of India whom should I write to about making arrangements for securing a passage for an Englishwoman, a fellow-worker, in one of cargo boats? Usually I used to write to him about making necessary arrangements for white fellow-workers. Would it be possible for you to enquire about her accommodation in some cargo boat sailing from India?

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

59

June 7, 1937

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

My right hand needs a rest, so I usually employ it only on Mondays. For the rest of the week I dictate my correspondence as writing with my left hand consumes a lot of time.

I have framed a resolution in the light of the idea formed about Parmeshwari and have sent the same to him. He will now

have plenty of opportunity to put his talents to use. In case it meets with your approval, please append your signature to it and then send it to me. What is likely to emerge from it nobody knows but let Parmeshwari exercise his skills. Jamnalalji has already signed it.

Parnerkar might have reached there. I can get Pandya whenever you desire.

As regards financing the running of the Harijan Hostel and meeting the day-to-day expenses this may be made up, without unnecessary delay, if you think proper. What, however, must be clearly understood is that we cannot do anything without the prior approval of Thakkar Bapa. In order to discuss this matter it would be proper if you drop in at Wardha while on your way to Delhi.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

## 60

June 9, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I had seen at Venice Bapu's interview to the *News Chronicle*. It has removed all misunderstanding about the position. As I had pointed out at Tithal, people did feel as if he was demanding something new. I find Layton has already commented and I have no doubt that it had a good effect.

I am satisfied to note that I too had forwarded Bapu's views to the Viceroy and to the friends in London on exactly the lines of his interview to the *News Chronicle*. I had put a great emphasis on the point that Bapu was anxious that Congress should accept office and after putting this emphasis, I had a little fear in my mind whether in doing so I had not correctly represented him, but after reading his interview to the *News Chronicle*, I was very much relieved.

I clearly realise the good points of dismissal and I have no doubt that this will very much minimise the Governors having their own way. Where I feel hesitation in agreeing with Bapu's

point is this: Is it worth while now after all these talks to break? I know that by demanding dismissal he is testing the sincerity of Great Britain, but please tell Bapu that whatever be my personal views on this point, I will put his views strongly and correctly before the highest authorities in London whenever and wherever I get an opportunity.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

## 61

June 16, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have been talking to friends here and during the conversations I found that it is only the distrust that is working. There seems to be no fundamental difference in the position. It struck to me during the course of my conversations that it should be possible to paraphrase the idea of both sides in a way which may be acceptable to both the sides and so I drafted out something. Here it is:

In case of a serious disagreement between the Governor and his Minister, even though the dispute pertained to the field of the special responsibilities of the Governor, the Minister and the Governor will first through discussion try their best to come to an agreement, but if they ultimately fail to do so and it becomes necessary for the Governor to discard the advice of his Minister, he will intimate the latter in writing that he cannot accept his advice in this particular matter even though the Minister has to resign over it. The Minister in such circumstances will treat the Governor's intimation as tantamount to asking for his resignation.

It is my intention to put forward this suggestion to the



Secretary of State as my own. Of course I will make it clear that I had no authority to put this forward on behalf of Bapu or anyone else. But all the same I should like to know whether it meets Bapu's point. I thought it did and so thought I should press it on the Secretary of State, but in case Bapu thinks that it is not satisfactory, then I should like you to send me a cable immediately on receipt of my letter. The main idea, as I have understood, is that the responsibility of breaking the ministry should fall on the Governor. I have preserved the idea in this draft.

There is not the slightest truth in the statement that Lord Halifax is against the establishment of personal touch. This I can say from first hand knowledge. More I will write to you later on.

I understand the Working Committee is likely to meet shortly. The position here is not unhopeful and so until I find nothing is doing here, I hope the Working Committee will not take any step to bang the door. The people here are most anxious to get the Congress in the office. If there is the slightest hesitation to meet Bapu's point of dismissal, it is because of their distrust about the implications of an agreement. So far I have not come across anyone misunderstanding Bapu. The atmosphere is quite different from what it was in 1935. They appreciate his distrust, but say at the same time, "Why does he not accept office and find out for himself how far we are likely to help? Of course I am representing his views correctly and I have found that they find it difficult to answer to his arguments. So let the door be kept open until it is banged on this side; and I hope it will not be banged.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M.D. DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA

June 18, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have so far talked twice to Lord Lothian, once to Halifax and had a lengthy talk today with Findlater Stewart. They seem to be genuinely anxious that the Congress should accept office and perhaps the Viceroy's speech will be as conciliatory as possible. But I am almost sure that it will not meet Bapu's point of dismissal. When I talked to Sir Findlater Stewart, after a long discussion, he confessed that Bapu's attitude was not clearly put before him so far. He said he did not agree that dismissal was better than resignation but that both should be kept open to the Governor. He all the same admitted that dismissal gave technical advantage to the Congress. "Why should we," he said, "appear before the public every time as sinners?" to which of course I replied. But he said, "If you think that the Governor is going to act in an arbitrary fashion under resignation and will be more careful under dismissal, then you are mistaken. "I told him that even supposing that Bapu was mistaken in holding such a view, the question was whether they were going to break on this small point. They would not do if they were really anxious to get the Congress in office. I gave him my formula, but made it clear that I had not consulted Bapu about it and that it was my own idea. He is going to have a talk with Lord Zetland and my formula will also be put before him.

I suggested another thing that before Lord Linlithgow made any statement, it would be better if he found out before hand what would be its reaction on Bapu's mind. I pointed out the advantage of an agreement whereas one sided statements were something like 'throwing' them at the Congress. He agreed about the principle but said that it was very unfortunate that it was not possible to adopt this method so far. But he said it was too late now and hoped that the Viceroy's statement would satisfy Bapu. I am likely to meet Zetland next week.

I am quite clear about two things. One is that I am not unhopeful and the second is that in spite of all the Press interviews, they did not know Bapu's mind. Every time I said something, they said, "Oh, it is the first time we have heard this, but

now you have made it clear.” Even his article in the *Harijan* about the oath was not read by them and it was an agreeable surprise to them to find that Bapu held such views. They have also got a wrong notion that Bapu’s attitude represents a compromise between the right and the left wings of the Congress. I have corrected them on this point also. I also explained to them the implications of combating and ending which was quite different from wrecking. They did not know the distinction. So, I am hoping for the best, even though the Viceroy’s speech may not be as satisfactory as Bapu would like it to be. In view however of the general public feeling, which seems to be quite sympathetic, I have no doubt that Bapu will give his most sympathetic consideration to the Viceroy’s statement.

The English mind is in a way obstinate and very slow. Sometimes they make a mess by doing things at inopportune times but all the same I have no doubt in my own mind that British statesmen and the public are genuinely anxious to see the Congress in office.

Bhulabhai is here and I have been keeping in touch with him.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

M.D. DESAI,<sup>†</sup> ESQR.  
WARDHA

## 63

June 23, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have so far seen Lord Halifax, Lord Lothian, Sir Findlater Stewart and Lord Zetland. The first round is complete. Before leaving this country, perhaps I will see them again once more. Tonight I have invited Sir Findlater Stewart to dine with me when Bhulabhai also will be present. My note of talk with the Secretary of State goes by this mail. I have talked more or less on these very lines to everyone and the result has been nil so far.



Lord Zetland was very sympathetic, cordial and nice. They look a little distressed at the Congress attitude. They express a great desire to help in every way but do not reply definitely why they do not want to accept this dismissal formula. I have not yet heard any strong argument against this and whatever arguments were advanced were met by me. But the long and short seems to be that they themselves are a bit distrustful. Even naturally the British mind is very slow and so you cannot make it move easily. I do not doubt their sincerity. The general British opinion, that is the opinion of the man in the street, seems to be that India has now got complete self-Government and they do not understand all this fuss. Even in higher circles they seem to feel that even through this Constitution, India will reach her goal. The march of retreat of England, they think, has already begun and perhaps it will end sooner than later.

The Viceroy's speech represents more or less the views held here. You cannot complain about the delivery or the manner of his speech, but I admit that it is only a paraphrase of the second speech of the Secretary of State and so perhaps it would not meet Bapu's point. I have got nothing more to say except that I am pressing Bapu's point whenever I get an opportunity and I wish Bapu to make allowance for the slow mind of the Englishman. There is a certain amount of obstinacy also which is inherent in the Englishman's temper. Lord Halifax and Lothian both are helping, but the final decision rests entirely with the Secretary of State or perhaps with Sir Findlater Stewart.

I am pressing my own formula without knowing what Bapu has to say about it. Of course, I have made it clear that I have not consulted Bapu and that in case the India Office liked it, I would send it to him for his opinion. But I have no doubt that they will not give me any conclusive reply about it. I asked Sir Findlater Stewart if he could produce any alternative and he said that he tried his best but could not find one. Lord Zetland has still got an immense dislike for formulae.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA

64

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
June 25, 1937

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

What is there for me to write? My own power of reasoning is conditioned by a single consideration: how much what you are doing serves the national cause, removes the distress of the starving millions, raises their moral standard, contributes to their economic well-being, increases their intellectual capacity. If you are convinced that the activity you are engaged in does contribute to the realisation of these objectives, Congress is bound to set its seal of approval on it. If it fails to do that, its prestige will shrink, for the Congress has no asset whatever save and except its prestige. Whenever I hear any of my friends expound this pet principle of mine, I feel enthralled.

My health is possibly good, though the weakness persists. Change of climate will be no remedy; besides my contemplated tour of the Frontier province will itself be a change, provided the visit at all comes off. The climate there is quite bracing. There is no paucity of fruit.

Take care of your own health. I do hope the operation has helped.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

65

June 25, 1937

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I fear I must confess now that I am not likely to succeed in getting Bapu's formula accepted. There is no stiffness, no unwillingness, to meet Bapu but they have their own difficulties. In the first place, they don't admit—though dismissal gives a slight technical advantage—in actual practice for minimising interference, dismissal has got more efficacy than resignation.



They dispute the point that there is going to be interference. Their main difficulty is the dislike of formula, slow mind and the Parliament. So just as I failed at Tithal to convince Bapu, so I have failed here.

Day-before-yesterday night, I invited Findlater Stewart and Bhulabhai both to dine with me. They talked for three hours. Yesterday Bhulabhai saw Halifax and Lothian and they had lengthy talks. Bhulabhai will give you his first-hand impression and perhaps he will confirm that there is a genuine desire here that Congress should accept office.

So far as I am concerned, I do not anticipate that the Governors will now interfere. As Findlater Stewart himself stated there was no fear of interference before all this clarification and now he could say with ten time greater emphasis that there was no fear of any interference. I myself believe that after the speech of Lord Linlithgow all fears of interference should be given up. I cannot conceive of the Congress breaking after all this clarification from both sides. In substance they have given the assurance, if not in letter.

Somehow or other, for the last two years, I have been feeling that fighting may have been necessary in 1922 and 1930 but now perhaps it could be possible for us to achieve what we desire through constitution and friendship with Great Britain. Friendship is possible only if there was personal touch and so long as we are in opposition, mutual distrust will always prevail. Bapu himself wants to have friendship and I see no other method just now except to work the constitution. We need experience in administration. We also need a little turn in our way of thinking which in the past has been running on destructive lines. The work of construction should now be undertaken. That is how I feel.

It may be said that if the point was very small, why did the Government not give in? The argument is not so strong as it sounds. And after there is break, all this logic will be forgotten and what will remain will be distrust and fight. The loose thinking that is growing among certain sections of our people will get fresh impetus and however we may avoid it, direct action will become inevitable,

I am writing this again because this will reach when you will all be considering at Wardha about the final step, I have



spoken to Bhulabhai also. After talking to Lord Halifax he was a bit shaken. During my conversation with all the big guns here, I have found that although they do not concede our demand, they are very sympathetic and clearly appreciate the justification of our fears. If I have not succeeded, at least I have impressed. Bapu can now review the whole situation and take the final step. Meanwhile, I am continuing to press our point whatever be the result. Tomorrow Lansbury and this evening Geoffrey Dawson meet me.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

66

BOMBAY,  
June 26, 1937

MY DEAR LAKSHMINIWAS,

Herewith a letter received from pujya Mahatmaji. He wants arrangements made for free passage for an Englishwoman in one of the cargo boats sailing from India. After making necessary arrangements, inform Mahatmaji that you have done so. I believe the arrangements will be made in one of the cargo steamer handling our shipments of Jute. I have written to him that you would do the needful. Please enquire from him when she wishes to sail.

Baboji<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rameshwardas Birla

67

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA,  
June 28, 1937

MY DEAR LAKSHMINIWASJI,

I am guilty of an act of indiscretion. Your letter had stated that nobody should be sent to Pilani but it did not say anything about the machine. I was planning to write to you about the machine if it should be such, but was informed that a man has left for Pilani, taking the machine with him. Please excuse me.

Rameshwardasji might have written to you about arranging for free passage for a lady about to sail home—kindly let me know as soon as the arrangements are completed.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SHRI L. N. BIRLA  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

68

GROSSVENOR HOUSE,  
PARK LANE,  
LONDON, W. 1,  
June 30, 1937

*Air Mail*

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Since writing to you last, I have met Dawson of the *Times*, Sir Walter Layton of the *News Chronicle* and Mr. Lansbury. Tomorrow night I am again dining with Lord Zetland but that is a dinner to meet the Indian Trade Delegation and so I don't know whether I will have any opportunity to talk. Dawson, Walter Layton and Lansbury are seeing the India Office people and pressing the necessity of getting the Congress in. I will have more light after the 5th when Bapu will have made his decision. I still am hoping that Bapu will accept the Viceroy's speech.

No one has so far told me definitely that they are going to turn down the dismissal formula and from this, infer that perhaps they wish to leave this matter to be talked between the Governor and the minister. Eventually they may accept, but I don't know if they will. Whether we accept the Viceroy's speech or they accept our demand of dismissal, what is troubling me is this: "Would it be worth-while to break on this point ?" But of course, Bapu knows best.

I had all this time been keeping in touch with Lord Halifax, and even though I did not see him very often, I write to him immediately I feel like doing so. I asked him whether it would not be advisable on his part to write Bapu personally. He had gone to country side and therefore even if he wanted, he could not have written by the last mail. But he has written to me saying, "I had as a matter of fact sent him a message by Mr. Desai, which he was good enough to say he would give Mr. Gandhi, to the effect that my judgment as an individual, not as a colleague of the Secretary of State only, was that Congress would make a real mistake if they did not use the power this Constitution gave. And I ventured to remind Mr. Gandhi of how he and Mr. Emerson (as he then was) had worked together in 1931 ! This I did to show how the spirit of the I.C.S. would work under new conditions.'"

He also enquired whether I wanted to see him again, but I have replied saying that I would not waste his time just now but would meet him again after the 5th. So there the matter rests.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI, ESQR.  
WARDHA



## Letters without Date

69

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Bapu has dictated this letter on the question of dismissal today. Herewith its copy.

Wishing you bon voyage,

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

70

### Statement

(My draft has been revised by Mahatmaji. It was to be issued as a statement by Federation.)

We have considered the Premier's statement with all the consideration it deserves and while we welcome it as visualizing a constitution which is a distinct improvement on that recommended in the Simon Commission Report and the Government of India despatch, we feel it is yet too vague, and naturally lacking in a number of details, to enable us to grasp its full implications.

It is our considered opinion that India is at present groaning under a unbearable burden of taxation; and that until the productivity of the country is appreciably increased, its economic strength can offer no margin for any increase of taxation to finance reforms like education and sanitation. Extreme poverty coupled with heavy taxation makes the condition of the masses so wretched that any new constitution, if it is to do the effective good to the country, should from the very start ensure a cheap administration relieving the people of part of their existing burden. That being so, we have no hesitation in saying that Eleven Points which have come to be associated with the name of Mahatma Gandhi are typical of the reforms which can

bring about increased productivity and prosperity in the country and thus afford the needed relief. No constitution can have the desired measure of success that does not enable the Government of the country to carry out the programme envisaged by these Eleven Points.

The Federation while fully adhering to the principle of the early establishment of self-government amounting to complete Dominion Status in this country, is quite prepared to consider the question of reservations and safeguards for the transitional period. It is its view, however, that the reservations and safeguards which the Premier's statement contemplates will, unless they are considerably modified, virtually amount to converting the new Government into a collecting agency for the taxes necessary for the maintenance of those reservations and safeguards, and will thus nullify the very object of the establishment of responsibility at the Centre.

Whilst we submit the popular point of view for the earnest consideration of Government and of those claiming to speak on their behalf, we may not be amiss to suggest to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress that the time has come when they should explore the possibilities of an honourable settlement. We would invite them to share our belief that the Premier's statement does not preclude the possibility of the modifications we have suggested and we would therefore appeal to them to lose no opportunity for discussion of such modifications should it offer itself. We assure Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress that no constitution which does not guarantee a substantial measure of economic control sufficient for the purpose of carrying out the programme of reforms indicated by Mahatma Gandhi's Eleven Points will be acceptable to the Indian mercantile community for which the Federation speaks. But we quite clearly see that the Congress co-operation would be practically impossible without complete cessation of repression and discharge of all political prisoners and restoration of pre-repression conditions. We therefore strongly appeal to the Government to follow up the release of the leaders by the further gesture indicated by us.

The total revenues (net) of the Central Government and of the Provincial Governments amount to nearly 175 crores of which reservations or safeguards will require about a half made up as follows :

55 crores for Army.

15 crores for Debt Service (including Railway Debt).

7 crores for pensions.

10 crores for services.

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87 crores

This leaves about 88 crores spread over a number of items in which the possibilities of retrenchment are too limited. And it would be virtually impossible under the circumstances to carry out even in part, the programme of Mahatma Gandhi's Eleven Points with which we have associated ourselves. We have built high hopes on this programme the implementation of which means a drop of about 45 crores on the side of revenue. Unless therefore the reservations contemplated in the Premier's statement are substantially modified, it will mean the starting of the new Government upon its career with a heavy mortgage which at no time in the near future it can be in a position to redeem.

We do not see however any reason to believe that the suggestion of modifications so far as the reservations go, is precluded from such discussion as has been invited. The Premier's statement is vague because it is only an outline. If the reservations which he seems to ask for are the last word, there is in fact, little advance; but if as we suppose they are open to modifications and substantial modifications, they need not stand in the way of the discussion of details for which so many appeals have been made, and on which evidently so much depends.

We think that any such discussion, to be able to yield a real solution of the problem, must centre round the necessary reservations, ensuing :

1. Allotment for the Army which should not exceed a sum of Rs 20 crores;
2. provision of financial safeguards subject to an impartial examination of India's debt liability and to full popular control over the proposed Reserve Bank; and
3. protection of minorities.

We feel it our duty to suggest to Mahatma Gandhi and the



Congress that the time has come when they should explore the possibilities of an honourable settlement. We believe that the Premier's statement, with all its limitations, offers the possibility of such a settlement, and we feel that the co-operation for which he appeals should not be refused. We assure Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress that no constitution which does not assure to the country a measure of economic control sufficient for the purpose of carrying out a programme of reforms indicated by Mahatma Gandhi's Eleven Points will be acceptable to the Indian mercantile community for which the Federation speaks.

We are however aware that we can do little unless the Central Government stops the policy of repression and grants a general amnesty to political prisoners in order that the peaceful atmosphere which is all so much desired may be created and the co-operation without which no discussion can yield lasting results, may be forthcoming.















This is a collection of letters which Bapu wrote to me from time to time and also those which I wrote to him. The letters which Mahadevbhai and others wrote to me as well as those I wrote to them have also been included in this collection for the reason that they were written under Gandhi's instructions, inspiration or with his consent. In fact, even the letters which I wrote to them were all meant for Bapu only. Therefore, considering all these as correspondence between Bapu and myself, I have included them in this publication since, if I were to exclude those letters, the entire connecting link would be broken.

This bunch of letters provides an incomparable opportunity to the people to study the mind of Bapu. They get education as well, for Bapu's correspondence covers an assortment of many absorbing topics. What is of supreme importance is to understand this fact that whatever exhortations or directions that one finds here be they individual, political or ethico-religious, are not just those of a great man or Mahatma but of a saintly man and the outpourings of a friendly soul. As such they are useful in the life of the common man, edifying and worthy of emulation by all in their daily life.

Some hundred or two hundred years from now, this collection may become an invaluable treasure because the unfoldment of Bapu's real life will begin only after a century or two. This is my view.

Chandrasekhar

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

A hope free of all conditions is always there in me—it is very much there even if there is darkness everywhere. Its edifice is built on our truthfulness. ...

Let us discharge our duties fearlessly...

You will do all things with perseverance and patience. ...

Hearts will not undergo any change simply by spending money, even though you exercise any amount of wisdom and thoughtfulness while spending it. It will be possible to change hearts only when we have a number of pure hearted, disinterested workers with us.

**M. K. Gandhi**